



ELIZABETH BARRETT BROWNING.

THE POETICAL WORKS
OF
ELIZABETH BARRETT
BROWNING

WITH INTRODUCTION
BY
ALICE MEYNELL

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ELIZABETH BARRETT BROWNING

"HER glories shall never fade" Elizabeth Barrett Browning's fruitful genius, her passion for good, her abundance her nobility, her tenderness, and the strength that was in her impetuous wishes, her sex, her story, her marriage, her public spirit, and her English love of Italy,—all together have made her name perpetual. And as to the quality of those who remember her, the character of the company her memory keeps, the kind of society her fame frequents, no one could wish her a world of readers of her poetry fitter for the woman than is that world which actually does value her labours. It is a world incorrupt, full of affections, devoted to truth, and in love—whatever "liberty" may mean—with liberty. None can be constant readers of Mrs. Browning without loyalty of heart, or without sympathy, or without holding steadfastly the inner doctrine of self-sacrifice. None who, in the modern world, have taken the tremendous step of denying that doctrine and of refusing it—an act of the soul that is momentous, and yet taken with small deliberation—will be attached to her poetry or patient with it. Her readers, too, are lovers of art, the more intelligent as they do not stop to divide the art from the substance as do those who follow the fashion to separate a building from its architecture.

Whatever may ultimately become of the rather belated romance—costume pieces and armour pieces—which Mrs. Browning made the subject of a group of her once most popular poems—the poems themselves must long remain fresh because of the humanity with which the author stuffed out those clothes. A knight a page, the paynim, or a lady and her rival knights a castle, and a charger—these were not heartless material with her. Not in the sonnets of her own life, nor in the poems on Italy, the emotion of which in a sense cost her life, nor in the spiritual songs of her abundant faith and devotion, is there more vivid or more true feeling than in these imitation romances. Heart and a moral—both alive—are in them all. She seems to have taken a real pleasure in the chivalry and the armour, the pleasure fostered by the times in which she lived. As we too think of anything inaccessible, gloriously coloured and impossible—something remote and Asiatic, for instance, only that Asia is now ransacked like the rest—so a poetess of 1840 thought of the days when men and women were picturesque. A mid-19th-century woman could hardly help but practise the deplorable humility "of not aspiring to be fair," or of not aspiring to be pictorial. Her house, her dress, her street, sepa-

rated her from simplicity and from splendour of living, and, if she was a writer, she wrote of fortunate ladies who were more free, more natural, and more splendid. A very *banal* literature of romance—prose and verse—was the consequence. Mrs. Browning's fancy was inevitably caught, like that of others, by the helm and the hall, the tower and the vesper bell, the abbess in black and the chatelaine in jewels. She hardly turned the personages of this common drama into very characteristic beings, but she did make their stories live with her own impassioned spiritual life. Nothing ever made her spirit, her morality, her resolute goodness, flag or falter.

Mrs. Browning's morality was positive. The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and her poetry was almost always violent. Her onset carries the day, and we hardly ask whether there was as much power as violence in the rush, or as much grasp as will. It was by means of one of the poems in which her will was most impetuous that she lent a hand in the carrying of an inestimable social reform in England. "The Cry of the Children" was loud as well as strong, even shrill, perhaps, at any rate it reached all ears, it had its effect. There are few conceivable human sorrows, losses, or afflictions that would not be overabundantly consoled by the consciousness of having done part of such a work as the manumission of the little slaves of the factories and mines. It is not necessary to claim for Mrs. Browning's poem an influence greater than it may have had. To have done something is so much happiness and success that no one need feign that she did all. Her maternal spirit would be overwhelmed by such great offspring, but if she did not do all to save the young unfortunate, she did much. Even now they are not all saved. Her work is not yet finished, but it is still hers, as far as it is prospering, and will be hers in better times when, by others, it may be better done, because her song will never be forgotten. Among her glories, the glory of this work has become historical. Even those who are so critical as to find the poem somewhat hurried and effusive, admit that nothing that was merely excited, emotional, or hysterical could be so touching. And this quality of tenderness is perceptible and quick in all she has written about children, happy and unhappy, living and dead.

If the knight and the lady had fresh and spiritual meaning for her, and were not made vulgar for her zeal and her heart, the over-written subject of little children and the sentimentalised subject of their early death were to her perpetual and unmarred, fresh as nature and inviolate. So is it with the "conventional" landscape, which we may think bad pictures of mountains, waterfalls, and pines had spoilt for our unlucky and belated eyes, but which, in fact and in nature, when we do face them, when we surprise them aloof in their reality, are as far apart from minor art as though man had never opened any exhibitions—as solitary, as ancient, and as original. The grave of a child, or of a poet, as it is, or as Mrs. Browning contemplated it, is restored to poetry and to tears, or rather was never lost to them.

"Her glories shall never fade." This was a poet's conviction of the fresh immortality of the poet he married. Robert Browning, who made this one emphatic prophecy, did not much dabble in written

criticism Perhaps there is no famous writer who has written less about writing—so far as the public knows His own poetry would hardly permit explanations, would gain no security by defence, and indeed seems to lose something of its strength of movement when it is divided and dispersed into little rills and streamlets by the care of commentators, and spread out thinly for examination Browning does not give us the prose of other men's poetry, and he left to Societies the care of giving us the prose of his own A word of his about poetry is rare and valuable, and it is appropriate to find it, not in prose of his, but in verse¹ It is appropriate also that he does not pause to give reasons, but uses that simple form of prophecy which is taken into the speech of all great men in their securest moments, as it is also used by the world with very various sound Poets have the right to be prophets, for if prophecy is cheap when it is done with ease, it costs a prophet's whole authority when it is done with honour

"Her glories shall never fade," even when that in her poetry shall fade which had more semblance of life than force of life—the faults that came of a too conscious and too emphatic revolt against her time, a too resolute originality In another age Elizabeth Barrett Browning would not have needed, or have thought she needed, to spend her strength upon a strained attitude That attitude is so tense at times as to become defiant The blank verse of "Aurora Leigh" is defiant almost throughout, and the phrase has a turn of assertion and of menace It needs that the reader should keep his own composure in order to feel the value, the recollection and deliberation, of the principles of life and art that she served In her politics she was too rash, indeed, but not in her steadfast eagerness for righteousness and in the continuous impulsiveness of her passion for truth Such impulses are those of perpetual motion, they are flights like the flight of planets Here is no flagging and no fall, and the leap of the spirit is not rash enough None the less are those moments welcome when the author of "Lady Geraldine's Courtship" relaxes the rush of her manner and gathers herself into a shape of gravity and ease better befitting the dignity of her feeling For example, the "Sea-Mew" has such a pause of style, and so have some of the "Sonnets from the Portuguese," in which is audible the sweetest and much the slowest of her whispers The sense of hurry, otherwise, is felt somewhat as a waste of the reader's will, if not of hers It was no waste of her will if only the rush of the style—I had almost said the dash, but no such vulgar suggestion would be just—was natural to her, was really her mood, or her most frequent mood, and not—as already suggested—a thing assumed because the times were dull and the literary manners of the day demure

It is difficult not to attribute something of this resolute style to the seclusion of the years in the course of which Mrs Browning's literary habits were formed Nothing but the secrecy of a dark sick-room and a sofa could give a sensitive woman the strange courage of Elizabeth Barrett's poems Out of sight she had no fear of the vociferous

¹ "Balausion's Adventure"

though sweet part she took in the world. She was bold in her hiding-place—very bold, for example, as a letter-writer. Some of her correspondents had never seen her face, she smote them with words of emphatic play, rallied them, challenged them, faced them in twenty encounters. There is a certain tone of letter-writing—confident, with emphatically-finished sentences, and a sense of effect, without much cost of wit. Byron seems to have invented it, chiefly for the sake of its results upon the mind of an admiring, respectfully deprecating Tom Moore. With Byron it was a style of bounce. It was never masculine enough to be called swashing, even by Rosalind, and exceedingly gentle women caught the way of it. See, for instance, how Charlotte Brontë wrote to correspondents who did not know her, to those who did, her tone was more wavering, more reluctant, and more natural. That Byron tone then, is the one, much refined, and joined to intellectual matter, which Elizabeth Barrett's letters sound at times. It would be grotesque to liken her to Byron—the most sincere soul to the paltry soul, incapable of valuable sincerity—and there is no possible kinship of spirit. It is a mere manner, common in its day to the mildest spirits, conscious of themselves. It disappeared from Miss Browning's letters precisely when she appeared—when she rose from her sofa, stood at a husband's side, received his friends, faced the fact of her fame with her own delicate physique, no longer lurking in that delusive bower which secluded writers—those who are women—are apt to build for themselves out of their fancies as to what they probably seem to be in the mind and thought of the world of their readers. Of all the bowers of women this is the least worthy, the least sweet, the least stable, and the least profitable. It is curious to watch Charlotte Brontë—shy when she was modestly visible—march martially into that sham hiding-place and strut within. A sham hiding-place, because the woman, despite her reason and her self-knowledge, can hardly resist the tempting peril of thinking of herself not as she is but as she thinks she may be conjectured to be by those who perceive her, or guess at her, from what she writes. It is an intricacy of guesses. And she, seeing a strange figure wearing her name and author of her words, feels a change enormously refreshing and relieving. She has known herself all too well for a certain number of years, and here is a new self, and generally a flattered self, almost to believe in. Elizabeth Barrett was evidently too experienced a soul really to let her own simplicity so slip aside, but her letters are not to be read without the perception of an illusion, an illusive Elizabeth, fugitive indeed, but detained by her own hand for a little time within her literary bower.

Throughout the political poems, but most of all in "Casa Guidi Windows," the poet is a little wrought upon by the stimulating consciousness that contemporary political history is not very often an inspiration of a woman's song. She is not calm. The care of public affairs takes, in her verse, a teaching, announcing, denouncing, judicially excited tone, whereas the questions so whirled to an eloquent conclusion are amongst the most difficult of the century, and matter for a deliberate thought more fitly uttered in a dry, daily, hesitating

voice than in rhyme and rhetoric Mrs Browning disposes, for example, of the small states in favour of Italian unity, but what would her heart have felt had it indeed been prophetic—had it possessed that sight of the future which it assumed as a very condition of rhetorical verse—and had it perceived the Italy of fifty years ahead, a deciduous nation thronging abroad, over seas, and into modernised towns, defeated, like a helpless rout of autumn leaves hurried by the winds of a national adversity These people were once—when she inordinately pried them—the most industrious of European people, agricultural in work and heart, enduring privations that were not bitter, not squalid, and not stunting to mind or muscle They had their faults, but the prevalent system of land-tenure interwove their interests with the landlord's, so that the egoism of poverty was, as it were, unclosed, unloosed, partaken, and made human, and the tendency to tyrannous overwork was checked by the gay rebukes of Church holidays and the climate Where peasant-proprietorship existed, a soil that can give ten hay-harvests in a year secured food to all the frugal But before the Triple Alliance was even a project, the agriculture of Italy was taxed almost to confiscation, in honour of the new "European Power," and since then the limit has been overpassed in honour of the "European Power of the first class" The destruction of the farmers and peasants of Italy is not an act of yesterday It dates from the events that Mrs Browning sang in "Casa Guidi Windows" There are now, too, certain phases of life in the Sicilian mines that she did not foretell when she uttered "The Cry of the Children" in England The mournful sequel to "Casa Guidi Windows" has been acted, not written The disaster of the corruption of Italy would not be "accepted of song," and no singer will make hymns to it In the fervour of national movement, sentimental war, grievance, patriotism, indignation, and idea, the Englishwoman who wrote that poem even condescended, in the cause of Italian unity, to introduce into her verse the name of "Pope Joan"—either seriously, and as though the name and personage were historical, and had never been disproved, or else cynically, as though, in the cause of Italian unity, a vulgar myth or two could piously be paltered with If a lofty allusion to that long-rebuked myth, "Pope Joan," accompanied by indignation—that must, alas! have been either simulated or ignorant—was laxly forgiven to an authoress over-excited by foreign politics, how does it look now that the foreign politics have ended in so much sorry prose, now that the grievance is more than redressed, and the fires are out? It is just worth noting that the good Englishwoman has an impetuous line upon the heroism of "Garibaldi's wife," whereas the wife in question was a wife, but not his "Casa Guidi Windows" is not only an irresponsible piece of contemporary history, it is also a falsetto outcry, and a stiff and heavy-footed work in versification *Terza rima* it is not, though at starting you get an impression that it ought to be It is but an arrangement of stanzas, whereas the linked and continuous *terza rima*, obviously, is designed to make the stanza impossible Although the *terza rima* flies low and not swiftly, it never alights, until the innovation of a couplet closes two final wings

In her lovely "Sonnets from the Portuguese," Mrs Browning is strictly Petrarchan in rhymes though not in pauses—not, therefore, in construction. And through this narrow pass of difficulty for English language the noble impulse of her thought takes her sweetly, swiftly, and in poetic grace of action. With the higher workmanship goes closer thinking. Every sonnet of the series has a subject fit for it, a thought with a close. As you come to the last line, and the heart of the poem, that has throbbed strongly, subsides, you acquiesce in the last word. It is the last word, for the time. "Her glories shall never fade," and they shall flourish chiefly in these poems, full of pure heart and of intelligence. It does not need to make a very large collection of best sonnets in the language in order to enclose these. None but the smallest would exclude them. Here is no question of preferences in style and manner. In the sonnets the meaning is in full and calm possession, and manner marches under that steady leadership.

Mrs Browning was one of the few women poets who have done more than pass over the surface of the classics. She was not only well read, but passionately well read, in Greek literature while she was still young, and not only in the poets, dramatists and philosophers of the antique times properly so called, but in the Greek Christian writers—Fathers and Apologists—through whose work she made for herself a peculiar path of study. But the purest and severest examples of the great ages left her unaffected except by admiration. Neither the Greek measure nor the Roman limit put any detaining or moderating touch upon her enterprising mind. To the spur, to the loosened rein, to the lash, to the chirrup, that Pegasus of hers was ready to answer with a bound, but not to the curb. There is no general conclusion to be drawn from this fact of her poetic history, nor need we make more than is reasonable of the ignorance of Keats or the scholarship of Tennyson, in the controversy as to Greek. One thing only is too sure and too obvious to need proof—that in one literature a writer of English poetry or prose must be well and deeply read, and that is English literature. Whatever he may gain, or not gain, from the fifth century before Christ in Greece, he cannot, without disabling loss to his own English, neglect the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries after Christ in England. It is not very evident that Mrs Browning gave much studious attention to Jeremy Taylor or Hooker, to Campion or Vaughan. She is modern with the modernism of 1840 in romance, of 1860 in sentiment and ethics. It is not that she is always thus demonstrative and excitable, I have already named her quieter and less strained poetry with all admiration, but we cannot read without a conviction that she found her own keenest satisfaction in the other mood, and held as her successes the poems that she seemed to sign with a flourish. And this I am paradoxically constrained to say of a poet distinctively intellectual, for this she is. She does not write without a thought worthy the name. Emotion is always there, but emotion vibrating from the intellect. Not a love-lyric of hers, not a song of romance, not a religious meditation, but is not only governed, but formed, by a thought. This warmest, most cordial, most touched and touching, most moved and moving, of writers—this woman

eminently a woman of feeling—has her place amongst the intellectual poets of our great literature. And even those who most delight in the nothingness of the immortal little sing-songs of Burns and Byron will doubtless confess that the verse of rational man or woman is in a worthier world of poetry.

Mrs. Browning's best art was also her most natural feeling, her most natural thought, and her least conscious diction her most expressive. She needed some more responsible enthusiasm than that which she cherished for the expulsion of the Austrian in order to do her best—such a passion as the Love in the sonnets, and the Devotion in "Cowper's Grave."

ALICE MEYNELL

A CHRONOLOGY OF MRS BROWNING

Born at Burn Hall, Durham	March 6th, 1806
" The Battle of Marathon "	1820
" An Essay on Mind "	1826
" Prometheus Bound "	1833
" The Seraphim "	1838
" Poems "	1844
Married Robert Browning	1846
" Sonnets [from the Portuguese] "	1847
Birth of her son	1849
" The Runaway Slave at Pilgrim's Point "	1849
" Casa Guidi Windows " .	1851
" Two Poems by E B and R Browning "	1854
" Aurora Leigh "	1857
" Poems before Congress "	1860
Died at Florence	June 30th, 1861
Last Poems	1862
" The Greek Christian Poems "	1863
" Letters of E B Browning " Two vols	1877

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MRS. BROWNING'S POEMS

AN ESSAY ON MIND

WITH OTHER POEMS

1826

"Brama assai, poco spera, e nulla chiede"
—*Tasso*

PREFACE

IN offering this little Volume to the world, it is not my intention to trespass long on its indulgence, "with prefaces, and passages, and excusations." As, however, preface-writing strangely reminds one of Bottom's prologuizing device, which so ingeniously sheweth the "disfiguration of moonshine," and how lion was no lion after all, but plain "Snug the joiner." I will treat the subject according to my great prototype, declaring to those readers who "cannot abide lions" that their "parlous fear" is here unnecessary, and assuring the public that "moonshine" shall be introduced as seldom as is consistent with modern composition.

But something more is necessary, and since writers commonly make use of their prefaces as opportunities for auricular confession to the absolving reader, I am prepared to acknowledge, with unfeigned humility, that the imputation of presumption is likely to be attached to me, on account of the form and title of this production. And yet to imagine that a confidence in our powers is undeviatingly shewn by our selection of an extensive field for their exertion, is an error for the subject supports the writer, as much as it is supported by him. It is not difficult to draw a succession of affecting images from objects intrinsically affecting and ideas arising from an elevated subject are naturally elevated. As Tacitus hath it, "*matéria aluntur*." Thought catches the light reflected from the object of her contemplation, and "expanded by the genius of the spot," loses much of her material

grossness, unless indeed like Thales, she fall into the water while looking at the stars.

"Ethical poetry" says that immortal writer we have lost "is the highest of all poetry, as the highest of all earthly objects must be moral truth." I am nevertheless aware how often it has been asserted that poetry is not a proper vehicle for abstract ideas—how far the assertion may be correct is with me a matter of doubt. We do not deem the imaginative incompatible with the philosophic, for the name of Bacon is on our lips, then why should we expel the argumentative from the limits of the poetic? If indeed we consider Poetry as Plato considered her, when he banished her from his republic, or as Newton when he termed her "a kind of ingenious nonsense," or as Locke, when he pronounced that "gaming and poetry went usually together," or as Boileau, when he boasted of being acquainted with two arts equally useful to mankind—"writing verses and playing at skittles,"—we shall find no difficulty in assenting to this opinion. But while we behold in poetry, the inspirings to political feeling the "*monumentum aere perennius*" of buried nations we are loth to believe her unequal to the higher walks of intellect when we behold the works of the great though erring Iucretius the sublime Dante the reasoning Pope—when we hear Quintilian acknowledge the submission due from Philosophers to Poets, and Gibbon declare Homer to be "the lawgiver the theologian, the historian, and the philosopher of the ancients," we are *unable* to believe it. Poetry is the enthusiasm of the understanding,

and, as Milton finely expresses it, there is "a high reason in her fancies"

As, according to the plan of my work, I have dwelt less on the operations of the mind than on their effects, so I have not touched on that point difficult to argue, and impossible to determine—the nature of her substance. The investigation is curious, and the subject a glorious one, but, after all, our closest reasonings thereupon are acquired from analogy, and our most extensive views must be content to take their places among other ingenious speculations. The columns of Hercules are yet unpassed. Metaphysicians have cavilled and confuted, but they have failed in their endeavour to establish any permanent theoretical edifice on that windy site. The effort was vainly made even by our enlightened Locke, and, as in the days of Socratic disputation, it is still given to the learned to ask, though not to answer, *τί δὲ ἐστὶ ψυχὴ*. Perhaps, however the following sensible acknowledgment would better become their human lips, than the most artfully constructed hypothesis—The things we understand are so excellent that we believe what we do not understand to be likewise excellent.¹

The effects of mental operation, or productions of the mind, I have divided into two classes—the philosophical, and the poetical, the former of which I have subdivided into three divisions—History, Physics, and Metaphysics. History, or the doctrine of man, as an active and social being, Physics, or the doctrine of efficient causes, Metaphysics, or the doctrine of abstractions, and final causes. Lord Bacon's comprehensive discernment of the whole, and Locke's acute penetration into parts, have assisted me in my trembling endeavour to trace the outline of these branches of knowledge. To have considered them methodically,

¹ I here adopt, with some little variation, an expression which fell from Socrates, on the subject of a work by Heraclitus the obscure

and in detail, would have greatly exceeded both the limits of my volume, and, what is more material, the extent of my information but if I may be allowed to hope that

"The lines, though touch'd thus faintly, are drawn right,

I shall have nothing left to wish

Poetry is treated in as cursory a manner as Philosophy, though not precisely for the same reasons. I have been deterred from a further development of her nature and principles, by observing that no single subject has employed the didactic pen with such frequent success, and by a consequent unwillingness to incur a charge of tediousness, when repeating what is well known, or one of presumption, when intruding new-fangled maxims in the place of those deservedly established. The act of white-washing an ancient Gothic edifice would be less indicative of bad taste than the latter attempt. Since the time of Horace many excellent didactic writers have formed poetic systems from detached passages of that unsystematic work his "*Ars Poetica*" Pope, and Boileau, in their Essays on Poetry and Criticism have with superior method traced his footsteps. And yet, "*haud passibus aequis*"—it is only justice to observe, that though the poem has been excelled, the Poet remains unequalled. For the merits of his imitators are, except in arrangement, Horace's merits while the merits of Horace are his own.²

I wish that the sublime circuit of intellect, embraced by the plan of my Poem had fallen to the lot of a spirit more powerful than mine. I wish it had fallen to the lot of one familiar with the dwelling-place of Mind, who could search her secret chambers, and call forth those that sleep, or of one who could enter into her temples, and cast out the iniquitous who buy and sell, profaning the sanctuary of God, or of one who could try the

² He is indebted to Aristotle, which however cannot be said to affect his poetical originality

golden links of that chain which hangs from Heaven to earth, and shew that it is not placed there for man to covet for lucre's sake or for him to weigh his puny strength at one end against Omnipotence at the other, but that it is placed there to join, in mysterious union, the natural and the spiritual the mortal and the eternal the creature and the Creator I wish the subject of my Poem had fallen into such hands that the powers of the execution might have equalled the vastness of the design—and the Public will wish so too But as it is—though I desire this field to be more meritoriously occupied by others—I would mitigate the voice of censure for myself I would endeavour to shew, that while I may have often erred, I have not clung willingly to error and that while I may have failed in representing I have never ceased to love Truth If there be much to condemn in the following pages let my narrow capacity, as opposed to the infinite object it would embrace, be generously considered, if there be any thing to approve, I am ready to acknowledge the assistance which my illustrations have received from the exalting nature of their subject—as the waters of Halys acquire a peculiar taste from the soil over which they flow

AN ESSAY ON MIND

"My narrow leaves cannot in them containe
The large discourse —*Spenser*

ANALYSIS OF THE FIRST BOOK

THE poem commences by remarking the desire, natural to the mind, of investigating its own qualities—qualities the more exalted, as their development has seldom been impeded by external circumstances—The various dispositions of different minds are next considered, and are compared to the varieties of scenic nature, inequalities in the spiritual not being more wonderful than inequalities in the natural—Byron and Campbell contrasted—The varieties of genius having been thus treated, the art of

criticism is briefly alluded to, as generally independent of genius but always useful to its productions—Jeffrey—The various stages of life in which genius appears, and the different causes by which its influence is discovered—Cowley Alfieri—Allusion to the story of the emotion of Thucydides on hearing Herodotus recite his History at the Olympic Games—The elements of Mind are thus arranged Invention, Judgment, Memory, and Association—The creations of mind are next noticed, among which we first behold Philosophy—History Science and Metaphysics are included in the studies of Philosophy

Of History, it is observed, that though on a cursory view her task of recalling the past may appear of little avail it is in reality one of the highest importance—The living are sent for a lesson to the grave—The present state of Rome alluded to, and the future state of England anticipated—Condemnation of those who deprive historical facts of their moral inference, and only make use of their basis to render falsehood more secure—Gibbon—Condemnation of those who would colour the political conduct of past ages with their own political feelings—Hume, Mitford—From the writers, we turn to the readers of history—Their extreme scepticism, or credulity—They are recommended to be guided by no faction, but to measure facts by their consistency with reason—to study the personal character and circumstances of an historian, before they give entire credit to his representations—The influence of private feeling and prejudice—Miller—Science is introduced—Apostrophe to man—Episode of Archimedes—Parallel between history and science—The pride of the latter considered most excessive—The risk attending knowledge—Buffon Leibnitz—The advantageous experience to be derived from the errors of others illustrated by an allusion to Southey's Hexameters—Utility the object of science—An exclusive attention to parts depre-

cated, since it is impossible even to have a just idea of PARTS without acquiring a knowledge of their relative situation in the whole—The extreme difficulty of enlarging the contemplations of a mind long accustomed to contracted views—The scale of knowledge—every science being linked with the one preceding and succeeding—giving and receiving reciprocal support—Why this system is not calculated, as might be conjectured either to render scientific men superficial or to intrude on the operations of genius—That the danger of knowledge originates in PARTIAL knowledge—Apostrophe to Newton

BOOK I

SINCE Spirit first inspir'd, pervaded
all
And Mind met Matter, at th' Eternal
call—
Since dust weigh'd Genius down, or
Genius gave
Th' immortal halo to the mortal's
grave,
Th' ambitious soul her essence hath
defin'd,
And Mind hath eulogiz'd the pow'rs of
Mind
Ere Revelation's holy light began
To strengthen Nature and illumine
Man—
When Genius, on Icarian pinions,
flew,
And Nature's pencil, Nature's por-
trait, drew,
When Reason shudder'd at her own
wan beam,
And Hope turn'd pale beneath the
sickly gleam—
Even then hath Mind's triumphant
influence spoke
Dust own'd the spell, and Plato's
spirit woke—
Spread her eternal wings and rose
sublime
Beyond th' expanse of circumstance
and time
Blinded but free, with faith instinc-
tive, soar'd,
And found her home, where prostrate
saints ador'd!

Thou thing of light! that warm'st the
breasts of men
Breath'st from the lips, and tremblest
from the pen!
Thou form'd at once t' astonish fire,
beguile—
With Bacon reason, and with Shake-
speare smile!
The subtle cause ethereal essence!
say,
Why dust rules dust, and clay sur-
passes clay
Why a like mass of atoms should
combine
To form a Tully and a Catiline?
Or why with flesh perchance of equal
weight
One cheers a prize-fight, and one
freed a state?
Why do not I the muse of Homer call
Or why indeed did Homer sing at
all?
Why wrote not Blackstone upon
love's delusion
Or Moore, a libel on the Constitu-
tion?
Why must the faithful page refuse to
tell
That Dante Laura sang and Pet-
rarch Hell—
That Tom Paine argued in the
throne's defence—
That Byron nonsense wrote and
Thurlow sense—
That Southey sigh'd with all a
patriot's cares
While Locke gave utterance to Hexa-
meters?
Thou thing of light! instruct my pen
to find
Th' unequal pow'rs, the various forms
of Mind!
O'er Nature's changeful face direct
your sight,
View light meet shade, and shade
dissolve in light!
Mark, from the plain, the cloud-
capped mountain soar,
The sullen ocean spurn the desert
shore!
Behold, afar, the playmate of the
storm
Wild Niagara lifts his awful form—
Springs his black foam above the mad-
d'ning floods,

Himself the savage of his native
woods—
See him in air, his smoking torrents
wheel
While the rocks totter, and the forests
reel—
Then giddy turn 'lo! Shakespeare's
Avon flows
Charm'd by the green-sward's kiss,
to soft repose,
With tranquil brow reflects the smile
of fame
And 'midst her sedges, sighs her
Poet's name

Thus in bright sunshine, and alter-
nate storms
Is various mind express'd in various
forms
In equal men, why burns not equal
fire?
Why are not valleys hills,—or moun-
tains higher?
Her destin'd way, hath destin'd
Nature trod,
While Matter, Spirit rules, and Spirit,
God

Let outward scenes, for inward sense
design'd
Call back our wand'rings to the world
of Mind!
Where Reason, o'er her vasty realms,
may stand
Convene proud thoughts, and stretch
her scepter'd hand
Here classic recollections breathe
around,
Here living Glory consecrates the
ground
And here, Mortality's deep waters
span
The shores of Genius, and the paths
of Man!

O'er this imagin'd land, your soul
direct—
Mark Byron, the Mont Blanc of
intellect,
'Twixt earth and heav'n exalt his
brow sublime,
O'erlook the nations, and shake hands
with Time!
Stretch'd at his feet do Nature's
beauties throng,
The flow'rs of love, the gentleness of
song,

Above, the Avalanche's thunder
speaks,
While Terror's spirit walks abroad,
and shrieks!
To some Utopian strand, some fairy
shore,
Shall soft-eyed Fancy waft her Camp-
bell o'er!
Wont, o'er the lyre of Hope his hand
to fling
And never waken a discordant string,
Who ne'er grows awkward by affect-
ing grace,
Or "Common sense confounds with
commonplace"
To bright conception, adds expres-
sion chaste
And human feeling joins to classic
taste
For still with magic art, he knows
and knew,
To touch the heart, and win the judg-
ment too!

Thus in uncertain radiance, Genius
glows,
And fitful gleams on various mind
bestows
While Mind exulting in th' admitted
day
On various themes, reflects its kind-
ling ray
Unequal forms receive an equal
light,
And Klopstock wrote what Kepler
could not write
Yet Fame hath welcom'd a less noble
few
And Glory hail'd whom Genius never
knew
Art labour'd Nature's birthright, to
secure
And forg'd, with cunning hand, her
signature
The scale of life is link'd by close
degrees,
Motes float in sunbeams, mites exist
in cheese,
Critics seize half the fame which bards
receive,—
And Shakespeare suffers that his
friends may live,
While Bentley leaves, on stilts, the
beaten track,
And peeps at glory from some
ancient's back (a)

But, though to hold a lantern to the sun	Shedding unmark'd an influence soft and bright
Be not too wise, and were as well un- done—	Till all the land-cape gather on the sight ?
Though, e'en in this inventive age alas !	As different talents, different breasts inspire,
A moral darkness can't be cur'd by gas—	So different causes wake the latent fire
And though we may not reasonably deem	The gentle Cowley of our native clime (b)
How poets' craniums can be turn'd by steam—	Lisp'd his first accents in Ionian rhyme
Yet own we, in our juster reasonings That lanterns gas, and steam, are useful things—	Alfieri's startling muse tun'd not her strings (c)
And oft, this truth, Reflection pon- ders o'er—	And dumbly look'd "unutterable things
Bards would write worse, if critics wrote no more	Till, when six lustrums o'er his head had past
Let Jeffrey's praise, our willing pen, engage,	Conception found expression's voice at last,
The letter'd critic of a letter'd age !	Broke the bright light, uprose the smother'd flame —
Who justly judges, rightfully dis- cerns,	And Mind and Nature own'd their poet's fame !
With wisdom teaches, and with candour learns	To some the waving woods, the harp of spring,
His name on Scotia's brightest tablet lives,	A gently breathing inspiration bring !
And proudly claims the laurel that it gives	Some hear from Nature's haunts her whisper'd call
Eternal Genius ! fashion'd like the sun,	And Mind hath triumph'd by an apple's fall
To make all beautiful thou look'st upon !	Wave Fancy's picturing wand ! recall the scene
Prometheus of our earth ! whose kindling smile	Which Mind hath hallow'd—where her sons have been—
May warm the things of clay a little while	Where 'midst Olympia's concourse, simply great
Till, by thy touch inspir'd thine eyes survey'd,	Th' historic sage, the son of LACES, sate,
Thou stoop'st to love the glory thou hast made	Grasping th' immortal scroll—he breath'd no sound
And weepst, human like, the mor- tal's fall,	But, calm in strength, an instant look'd around
When, by-and-bye, a breath dis- perses all	And rose—the tone of expectation rush'd
Eternal Genius ! mystic essence ! say, How, on "the chosen breast," de- scends thy day !	Through th' eager throng—he spake, and Greece was hush'd !
Breaks it at once in Thought's celestial dream	See in that breathless crowd, Olorus stand, (d)
While Nature trembles at the sudden gleam ?	While one fair boy hangs list'ning on his hand—
Or steals it, gently, like the morning's light,	The young Thucydides ! with upward brow
	Of radiance, and dark eye, that beam- ing now

Full on the speaker, drinks th inspired air—	Raise the rapt brow and lift the thoughtful eye,
Gazing entranc d, and turn d to marble there!	Whether the glimmering lamp, that Hist'ry gave
Yet not to marble—for the wild emotion	Light her enduring steps to some lone grave,
Is kindling on his cheek, like light on ocean,	The while she dreams on him, asleep beneath
Coming to vanish, and his pulses throb	And conjures mystic thoughts of life and death—
With transport, and the inarticulate sob	Whether on Science' rushing wings, she sweep
Swells to his lip—internal nature leaps	From concave heav'n to earth—and search the deep,
To glorious life, and all th' historian weeps!	Shewing the pensile globe attraction's force,
The mighty master mark d the favor d child—	The tides their mistress, and the stars their course
Did Genius linger there? She did, and smil d!	Or whether (task with nobler object fraught)
Still, on itself, let Mind its eye direct To view the elements of intellect—	She turn the pow'rs of thinking back on thought—
How wild Invention (daring artist!) plies	With mind, delineate mind and dare define
Her magic pencil, and creating dies, And Judgment, near the living can- vas stands	The point where human mingles with divine
To blend the colours for her airy hands	Majestic still, her solemn form shall stand
While Memory waits, with twilight mists o'ercast	To shew the beacon on the distant land—
To mete the length'ning shadows of the past	Of thought, and nature chronicler sublime!
And bold Association, not untaught, The links of fact, unites, with links of thought,	The would her lesson, and her teacher Time!
Forming th' electric chains, which, mystic bind	And when, with half a smile, and half a sigh
Scholastic learning, and reflective mind	She lifts old History's faded tapestry, I the dwelling of past years—she aye, is seen
Let reasoning Truth's unerring glance survey	Point to the shades, where bright- ning tints had been—
The fair creations of the mental ray, Her holy lips, with just discernment, teach	The shapeless forms outworn, and mildew'd o'er—
The forms the attributes, the modes of each,	And bids us rev'rence what was lov'd before,
And tell in simple words, the narrow span	Gives the dank wreath and dusty urn to fame
That circles intellect, and fetters man, Where darkling mists o'er Time's last footstep, creep,	And lends its ashes—all she can—a name
And Genius drops her languid wing —to weep	Think'st thou, in vain, while pale Time glides away,
See first Philosophy's mild spirit, nigh,	She rakes cold graves, and chronicles their clay?
	Think'st thou in vain, she counts the bony things,

Once lov'd as patriots, or obey'd as
kings ?

Lifts she, in vain, the past's mysteri-
ous veil ?

Seest thou no moral in her awful tale ?
Can man, the crumbling pile of nations,
scan,—

And is their mystic language mute for
man ?

Go ! let the tomb its silent lesson give,
And let the dead instruct thee how
to live !

If Tully's page hath bade thy spirit
burn,

And lit the raptur'd cheek—behold
his urn !

If Maro's strains, thy soaring fancy,
guide,

That hail " th' eternal city " in their
pride—(e)

Then turn to mark, in some reflective
hour,

The immortality of mortal pow'r !
See the crush'd column, and the
ruin'd dome—

'Tis all Eternity has left of Rome !
While travell'd crowds, with curious
gaze, repair,

To read the littleness of greatness
there !

Alas ! alas ! so, Albion shall decay,
And all my country's glory pass
away !

So shall she perish, as the mighty
must,

And be Italia's rival—in the dust,
While her ennobled sons, her cities
fair,

Be dimly thought of 'midst the things
that were !

Alas ! alas ! her fields of pleasant
green,

Her woods of beauty, and each well-
known scene !

Soon o'er her plains, shall grisly Ruin
haste,

And the gay vale become the silent
waste !

Ah ! soon perchance, our native
tongue forgot—

The land may hear strange words it
knoweth not,

And the dear accents which our
bosoms move,

With sounds of friendship, or with
tones of love,

May pass away, or, conn'd on
mould'ring page,

Gleam 'neath the midnight lamp,
for unborn sage,

To tell our dream-like tale to future
years,

And wake th' historian's smile, and
schoolboy's tears !

Majestic task ! to join, though plac'd
afar,

The things that have been, with the
things that are !

Important trust ! the awful dead, to
scan,

And teach mankind to moralize from
man !

Stupendous charge ! when, on the re-
cord true,

Depend the dead, and hang the living
too !

And, oh ! thrice impious he, who dares
abuse

That solemn charge, and good and ill
confuse !

Thrice guilty he who, false with
" words of sooth,"

Would pay, to Prejudice, his debt to
Truth,

The hallow'd page of fleeting Time
profane,

And prove to Man that man has liv'd
in vain,

Pass the cold grave, with colder jest-
ings, by,

And use the truth to illustrate a lie !

Let Gibbon's name be trac'd, in sor-
row, here,—

Too great to spurn, too little to re-
vere !

Who follow'd Reason, yet forgot her
laws,

And found all causes, but the " great
first Cause "

The paths of time, with guideless foot-
steps, trod,

Blind to the light of nature and of
God,

Deaf to the voice, amid the past's
dread hour,

Which sounds His praise, and chron-
icles His pow'r !

In vain for *him* was Truth's fair tablet
spread,

When Prejudice, with jaundiced
organs, read

In vain for us the polish'd periods
flow,

The fancy kindles, and the pages
glow,

When one bright hour, and startling
transport past,

The musing soul must turn—to sigh
at last

Still let the page be luminous and just,
Nor private feeling war with public

trust,
Still let the pen from narrowing views

forbear,
And modern faction ancient freedom

spare
But, ah! too oft th' historian bends
his mind

To flatter party—not to serve man-
kind,

To make the dead, in living feuds,
engage,

And give all time, the feelings of his
age

Great Hume hath stoop'd the
Stuarts' fame t' increase,

And ultra Mitford soar'd to libel
Greece! (f)

Yet must the candid muse, impartial,
learn

To trace the errors which her eyes
discern,

View ev'ry side, investigate each part,
And get the holy scroll of Truth by

heart,
No blame misplac'd, and yet no fault

forgot—
Like ink employ'd to write with—not

to blot
Hence, while historians just reproof

incur,
We find some readers, with their

authors, err,
And soon discover, that as few excel

In reading justly, as in writing well
For prejudice, or ignorance, is such,

That men believe too little, or too
much,

Too apt to cavil, or too glad to trust,
With confidence misplac'd, or blame

unjust
Seek out no faction—no peculiar

school—

But lean on Reason, as your safest
rule (g)

Let doubtful facts, with patient hand,
be led,

To take their place on this Procrustean
bed!

What, plainly, fits not, may be thrown
aside,

Without the censure of pedantic
pride

For nature still, to just proportion,
clings,

And human reason judges natural
things

Moreover, in th' historian's bosom
look,

And weigh his feelings ere you trust
his book,

His private friendships, private
wrongs, descry,

Where tend his passions, where his
int'rests lie—

And, while his proper faults your
mind engage,

Discern the ruling foibles of his age
Hence, when on deep research, the

work you find
A too obtrusive transcript of his

mind,
When you perceive a fact too highly

wrought,
Which kindly seems to prove a

fav'rite thought,
Or some opposing truth trac'd briefly

out,
With hand of careless speed—then

turn to doubt!
For private feeling, like the taper,

glows,
And here a light, and there a shadow,

throws
If some gay picture, wilely daubed,

were seen
With glass of azure, and a sky of

green,
Th' impatient laughter we'd suppress

in vain,
And deem the painter jesting, or in-

sane
But, when the sun of blinding pre-

judice
Glares in our faces, it deceives our

eyes,
Truth appears falsehood to the daz-

zled sight,

The comment apes the fact, and black
 seems white,
 Commingled hues, their separate
 colours lost,
 Dance wildly on, in bright confusion
 tost
 And, midst their drunken whirl, the
 giddy eye
 Beholds one shapeless blot for earth
 and sky
 Of such delusions let the mind take
 heed,
 And learn to think, or wisely cease to
 read,
 And, if a style of labour'd grace dis-
 play
 Perverted feelings, in a pleasing way,
 False tints, on real objects, brightly
 laid,
 Facts in disguise, and Truth in mas-
 querade—
 If cheating thoughts in beauteous
 dress appear,
 With magic sound, to captivate the
 ear—
 Th' enchanting poison of that page
 decline,
 Or drink Circean draughts—and turn
 to swine!
 We hail with British pride, and ready
 praise,
 Enlightened Miller of our modern
 days! (*h*)
 Too firm though temp'rate, liberal
 though exact,
 To give too much to argument or fact,
 To love details, and draw no moral
 thence,
 Or seek the comment, and forget the
 sense,
 He leaves all vulgar aims, and strives
 alone
 To find the ways of Truth, and make
 them known!
 Spirit of life! for aye, with heav'nly
 breath,
 Warm the dull clay, and cold abodes
 of death!
 Clasp in its urn the consecrated dust,
 And bind a laurel round the broken
 bust,
 While 'mid decaying tombs, thy pen-
 sive choice,
 Thou bid'st the silent utter forth a
 voice,

To prompt the actors of our busy
 scene,
 And tell what *is*, the tale of what *has*
been!
 Yet turn, Philosophy! with brow
 sublime,
 Shall Science follow on the steps of
 Time!
 As, o'er Thought's measureless
 depths, we bend to hear
 The whispered sound, which stole on
 Descartes' ear, (*i*)
 Hallowing the sunny visions of his
 youth
 With that eternal mandate, "Search
 for Truth!"
 Yes! search for Truth—the glorious
 path is free,
 Mind shews her dwelling—Nature
 holds the key—
 Yes! search for Truth—her tongue
 shall bid thee scan
 The book of knowledge, for the use
 of Man!
 Man! Man! thou poor antithesis of
 power!
 Child of all time! yet creature of an
 hour!
 By turns, chameleon of a thousand
 forms,
 The lord of empires, and the food of
 worms!
 The little conqueror of a petty space,
 The more than mighty, or the worse
 than base!
 Thou ruin'd landmark, in the desert
 way,
 Betwixt the all of glory, and decay!
 Fair beams the torch of Science in
 thine hand,
 And sheds its brightness o'er the
 glimmering land,
 While, in thy native grandeur, bold,
 and free,
 Thou bid'st the wilds of nature smile
 for thee,
 And treadest Ocean's paths full
 royally!
 Earth yields her treasures up—
 celestial air
 Receives thy globe of life—when,
 journeying there,
 It bounds from dust, and bends its
 course on high,

And walks, in beauty, through the
wondering sky
And yet, proud clay ! thine empire is
a span,
Nor all thy greatness makes thee
more than man !
While Knowledge, Science, only
serve t' impart
The god thou *would'st* be, and the
thing thou *art* !
Where stands the Syracusan—while
the roar
Of men, and engines, echoes through
the shore ?
Where stands the Syracusan ? hag
gard Fate,
With ghastly smile, is sitting at the
gate,
And Death forgets his silence 'midst
the crash
Of rushing ruins—and the torches'
flash
Waves redly on the straggling forms
that die,
And masterless steeds, beneath that
gleam, dart by,
Scared into madness, by the battle
cry—
And sounds are hurtling in the angrv
air,
Of hate, and pain, and vengeance,
and despair—
The smothered voice of babes—the
long wild shriek
Of mothers—and the curse the dying
speak !
Where stands the Syracusan ? tran-
quil sage,
He bends, sublime, o'er Science'
splendid page,
Walks the high circuit of extended
mind,
Surpasses man, and dreams not of
mankind,
While, on his listless ear, the battle
shout
Falls senseless—as if echo breath'd
about
The hum of many words, the laughing
glee,
Which linger'd there, when Syracuse
was free
Away ! away ! for louder accents fall—
But not the sounds of joy from
marble hall !

Quick steps approach—but not of
sylvic feet
Whose echo heralded a smile more
sweet,
Coming, all sport, th' indulgent sage,
t' upbraid
For lonely hours, to studious musing,
paid—
Be hushed ! Destruction bares the
flickering blade !
He asked to live, th' unfinished lines
to fill,
And died—to solve a problem deeper
still
He died the glorious ! who, with
soaring sight, (,)
Sought some new world, to plant his
foot of might,
Thereon in solitary pride, to stand,
And lift our planet, with a master's
hand !
He sank in death—Creation only gave
That thorn encumbered space which
forms his grave—
An unknown grave, till Tully chanced
to stray,
And named the spot where Archi-
medes lay !
Genius ! behold the limit of thy
power !
Thou fir'st the soul—but, when life's
dream is o'er
Giv'st not the silent pulse one throb
the more
And mighty beings come, and pass
away,
Like other comets, and like other—
clay
Though analysing Truth must still
divide
Historic state, and scientific pride,
Yet one stale fact, our judging
thoughts infer—
Since each is human, each is prone
to err !
Oft, in the night of Time, doth His-
tory stray
And lift her lantern, and proclaim it
day !
And oft, when day's eternal glories
shine,
Doth Science, boasting, cry—"The
light is mine !"
So hard to bear, with unobstructed
sight, (k)

Th' excess of darkness, or th' extreme of light

Yet, to be just, though faults belong to each,

The themes of one, an humbler moral, teach

And, 'midst th' historian's eloquence, and skill,

The human chronicler is human still
If on past power, his eager thoughts be cast,

It brings an awful antidote—'tis past!

If, deathless fame, his ravish'd organs scan,

The deathless fame exists for buried man

Power, and decay, at once he turns to view,

And, with the strength, beholds the weakness too

Not so, doth Science' musing son aspire,

And pierce creation, with his eye of fire

Yon mystic pilgrims of the starry way,

No humbling lesson, to his soul, convey,

No tale of change, their changeless course hath taught,

And works divine excite no earthward thought

And still, he, reckless, builds the splendid dream,

And still, his pride increases with his theme,

And still, the cause is slighted in th' effect,

And still, self-worship follows self-respect

Too apt to watch the engines of the scene,

And lose the hand, which moves the vast machine,

View Matter's form, and not its moving soul,

Interpret parts, and misconceive the whole

While, darkly musing 'twixt the earth and sky,

His heart grows narrow, as his hopes grow high,

And quits, for aye, with unavailing loss,

The sympathies of earth, but not the dross,

Till Time sweeps down the fabric of his trust,

And life, and riches, turn to death, and dust

And such is Man! 'neath Error's foul assaults,

His noblest moods beget his grossest faults!

When Knowledge lifts her hues of varied grace,

The fair exotic of a brighter place,

To keep her stem, from mundane blasts, enshrin'd,

He makes a fatal hot-bed of his mind,

Too oft adapted, in their growth, to spoil

The natural beauties of a generous soil

Ah! such is Man! thus strong, and weak withal,

His rise oft renders him too prone to fall!

The loftiest hills' fresh tints the soonest fade,

And highest buildings cast the deepest shade!

So Buffon err'd, amidst his chilling dream, (1)

The judgment grew material as the theme

Musing on Matter, till he called away

The modes of Mind, to form the modes of clay,

And made, confusing each, with judgment blind,

Mind stoop to dust, and dust ascend to Mind

So Leibnitz err'd, when, in the starry hour,

He read no weakness, where was written, "Power,"

Beheld the verdant earth, the circling sea,

Nor dreamt so fair a world could cease to be!

Yea! but he heard the Briton's awful name,

As, scattering darkness, in his might, he came,

Girded with Truth, and earnest to confute

What gave to Matter Mind's best
 attribute
 Sternly they strove—th' unequal
 race was run ! (m)
 The owl met the eagle at the sun !
 While such defects, their various
 forms, unfold ,
 And rust, so foul, obscures the bright-
 est gold—
 Let Science' soaring sons the ballast
 cast,
 But judge their present errors by
 their past
 As some poor wanderer, in the dark-
 ness, goes,
 When fitful wind, in hollow murmur,
 blows ,
 Hailing, with trembling joy, the
 lightning's ray,
 Which threats his safety, but illumines
 his way
 Gross faults buy deep experience
 Sages tell
 That Truth, like Æsop's fox, is in a
 well ,
 And, like the goat his fable prates
 about,
 Fools must stay in, that wise men
 may get out
 What thousand scribblers, of our
 age, would choose
 To throw a toga round the English
 muse ,
 Rending her garb of ease, which
 graceful grew
 From Dryden's loom, beprankt
 with varied hue !
 In that dull aim, by Mind unsancti-
 fied,
 What thousand Wits would have
 their wits belied,
 Devoted Southey ! if thou had'st
 not tried ! (n)
 Use is the aim of Science , this the
 end
 The wise appreciate, and the good
 commend
 For not, like babes, the flaming
 torch, we prize,
 That sparkling lustre may attract
 our eyes ,
 But that, when evening shades im-
 pede the sight,
 It casts, on objects round, a useful
 light

Use is the aim of Science ! give again
 A golden sentence to the faithful
 pen—
Dwell not on parts ! for parts con-
 tract the mind , (o)
 And knowledge still is useless, when
 confined
 The yearning soul, enclosed in narrow
 bound,
 May be ingenious, but is ne'er pro-
 found
 Spoil'd of its strength, the fettered
 thought grows tame ,
 And want of air extinguishes the
 flame !
 And as the sun, beheld in mid-day
 blaze,
 Seems turned to darkness, as we
 strive to gaze ,
 So mental vigour, on one object, cast,
 That object's self becomes obscured
 at last
 'Tis easy, as Experience may aver,
 To pass from general to particular,
 But most laborious to direct the soul
 From studying parts, to reason on
 the whole
 Thoughts, tram'd on narrow sub-
 jects, to let fall,
 And learn the unison of each with
 all
 In Nature's reign a scale of life we
 find
 A scale of knowledge we behold in
 mind ,
 With each progressive link, our steps
 ascend,
 And traverse all, before they reach
 the end ,
 Searching, while Reason's powers
 may farther go,
 The things we know not, by the
 things we know
 But hold ! methinks some sons of
 Thought demand,
 "Why strive to form the Trajan's
 vase in sand ?
 Are Reason's paths so few, that
 Mind may call
 Her finite energies, to tread them all ?
 Lo ! Learning's waves, in bounded
 channel, sweep,
 When they flow wider, shall they
 run as deep ?

Shall that broad surface, no dull shallow, hide,
 Growing dank weeds of superficial pride?
 Then Heaven may leave our giant powers alone,
 Nor give each soul a focus of its own!
 Genius bestows, in vain, the chosen page,
 If all the tome, the minds of all engage!"

Nay! I reply—with free congenial breast,
 Let each peruse the part, which suits him best!
 But, lest contracting prejudice mislead,
 Regard the context, as he turns to read!

Hence, liberal feeling gives th' enlighten'd soul,
 The spirit, with the letter of the scroll

With what triumphant joy, what glad surprise,
 The dull behold the dulness of the wise!

What insect tribes of brainless impudence
 Buzz round the carcase of perverted sense!

What railing idiots hunt, from classic school,
 Each flimsy sage, and scientific fool,
 Crying, "'Tis well! we see the blest effect
 Of watchful night, and toiling intellect!"

Yet let them pause, and tremble—vainly glad,
 For too much learning maketh no man mad! (*p*)

Too *little* dims the sight, and leads us o'er
 The twilight path, where fools have been before,
 With not enough of Reason's radiance seen,
 To track the footsteps, where those fools have been.

Divinest Newton! if my pen may shew
 A name so mighty, in a verse so low,—

Still let the sons of Science, joyful, claim
 The bright example of that splendid name!

Still let their lips repeat, my page bespeak,
 The sage how learned! and the man how meek! (*g*)

Too wise, to think his human folly less,
 Too great, to doubt his proper littleness,
 Too strong, to deem his weakness past away,
 Too high in soul, to glory in his clay

Rich in all nature, but her erring side
 Endow'd with all of Science—but its pride

ANALYSIS OF THE SECOND BOOK

METAPHYSICS—Address to Metaphysicians—The most considerable portion of their errors conceived to arise from difficulties attending the use of words—That on one hand, thoughts become obscure without the assistance of language, while on the other, language from its material analogy deteriorates from spiritual meaning—Allusion to a probable mode of communication between spirits after death—That a limited respect, though not a servile submission, is due to verbal distinctions—Clearness of style peculiarly necessary to Metaphysical subjects—The graces of Composition not inconsistent with them—Plato, Bacon, Bolingbroke—The extremes into which Philosophers have fallen with regard to sensation, and reflection—Berkeley, Condillac—That subject briefly considered—Abstractions—Longinus, Burke, Price, Payne Knight—Blind submission to authorities deprecated—The Pythagorean saying opposed, and Cicero's unphilosophical assertion alluded to—That, however it partakes of injustice to love Truth, and yet refuse our homage to the advocates of Truth—How the names of great writers become endeared to us by early recollections—Description of the School-boy's first intellectual

gratifications—That even without reference to the past, some immortal names are entitled to our veneration, since they are connected with Truth — Bacon — Apostrophe to Locke

Poetry is introduced—More daring than Philosophy, she personifies abstractions, and brings the things unseen before the eye of the Mind—How often reason is indebted to poetic imagery—Irring—The poetry of prose—Plato's ingratitude—Philosophers and Poets contrasted—An attempt to define Poetry—That the passions make use of her language—Nature the poet's study—Shakespeare—Human nature as seen in cities—Scenic nature, and how the mind is affected thereby—That Poetry exists not in the object contemplated, but is created by the contemplating mind—The ideal—Observations on the structure of verse, as adapted to the subject treated—Milton, Horace, Pope—The French Drama—Corneille, Racine—Harmony and chasteness of versification—The poem proceeds to argue that the muse will refuse her inspiration to a soul unattuned to generous sympathy, unkindled by the deeds of Virtue, or the voice of Freedom—Contemptuous notice of those prompted only by interest to aspire to poetic eminence—What should be the Poet's best guerdon—From the contemplation of motives connected with Freedom, we are led by no unnatural transition to Greece—Her present glorious struggle—Anticipation of her ultimate independence, and the restoration of the Muses to their ancient seats—Allusion to the death of Byron—Reflections on Mortality—The terrors of death as beheld by the light of Nature—The consolations of death as beheld with reference to a future state—Contemplation of the immortality of Mind, and her perfected powers—Conclusion

BOOK II

BUT now to higher themes ! no more confin'd

To copy Nature, Mind returns to Mind

We leave the throng, so nobly, and so well,

Tracing, in Wisdom's book, things visible,—

And turn to things unseen, where, greatly wrought,

Soul questions soul, and thought revolves on thought

My spirit loves, my voice shall hail ye, now,

Sons of the patient eye, and passionless brow !

Students sublime ! Earth, man, unmov'd, ye view,

Time, circumstance, for what are they to you ?

What is the crash of worlds,—the fall of kings,—

When worlds and monarchs are such brittle things !

What the tost, shatter'd bark, that blindly dares

A sea of storm ? Ye sketch the wave which bears !

The cause, and not th' effect, your thoughts exact,

The principle of action, not the act,—

The soul ! the soul ! and, 'midst so grand a task,

Ye call her rushing passions, and ye ask

Whence are ye ? and each mystic thing responds !

I would be all ye are—except those bonds !

Except those bonds ! ev'n here is oft descried

The love to parts, the poverty of pride !

Ev'n here, while Mind, in Mind's horizon, springs,

Her "native mud" is weighing on her wings !

Ev'n here, while Truth invites the ardent crowd,

Iron-like, they rush t' embrace a cloud !

Ev'n here, oh ! foul reproach to human wit !

A Hobbes hath reasoned, and Spinoza writ !

Rank pride does much ! and yet we justly cry,

<p>Our greatest errors in our weakness lie For thoughts uncloth'd by language are, at best, Obscure, while grossness injures those exprest— Through words,—in whose analysis, we find Th' analogies of Matter, not of Mind Hence, when the use of words is graceful brought, As physical dress to metaphysic thought, The thought, howe'er sublime its pristine state, Is by th' expression made degenerate, Its spiritual essence changed, or cramp'd, and hence Some hold by words, who cannot hold by sense, And leave the thought behind, and take th' attire— Elijah's mantle—but without his fire ! Yet spurn not words ! 'tis needful to confess They give ideas, a body and a dress ! Behold them traverse Learning's region round, The vehicles of thought on wheels of sound, Mind's winged strength, wherewith the height is won, Unless she trust their frailty to the sun Destroy the body !—will the spirit stay ? Destroy the car !—will Thought pursue her way ? Destroy the wings !—let Mind their aid forego ! Do no Icarian billows yawn below ? Ah ! spurn not words with reckless insolence, But still admit their influence with the sense, And fear to slight their laws ! Per- chance we find No perfect code transmitted to mankind, And yet mankind, till life's dark sands are run, Prefers imperfect government to none Thus Thought must bend to words ! —Some sphere of bliss,</p>	<p>Ere long, shall free her from th' alloy of this Some kindred home for Mind—some holy place, Where spirits look on spirits, " face to face,"— Where souls may see, as they them- selves are seen, And voiceless intercourse may pass between, All pure—all free ! as light, which doth appear In its own essence, incorrupt and clear ! One service, praise ! one age, eternal youth ! One tongue, intelligence ! one sub- ject, truth ! Till then, no freedom, Learning's search affords, Of soul from body, or of thought from words For thought may lose, in struggling to be hence, The gravitating power of Common- sense, Through all the depths of space with Phaeton hurl'd, T' impair our reason, as he scorch'd our world Hence, this preceptive truth, my page affirms— Respect the technicality of terms ! Yet not in base submission—lest we find That, aiding clay, we crouch too low for Mind, Too apt conception's essence to for- get, And place all wisdom in the alphabet. Still let appropriate phrase the sense invest, That what is well conceived be well exprest ! Nor e'er the reader's wearied brain engage, In hunting meaning down the mazy page, With three long periods tortured into one, The sentence ended, with the sense begun, Nor in details, which schoolboys know by heart,</p>
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Perplex each turning with the terms
 of art
 To understand, we deem no common
 good,
 And 'tis less easy to be *understood*
 But let not clearness be your only
 praise,
 When style may charm a thousand
 different ways,
 In Plato glow, to life and glory
 wrought,
 By high companionship with noblest
 thought,
 In Bacon, warm abstraction with a
 breath,
 Catch Poesy's bright beams, and
 smile beneath,
 In St John roll, a generous stream,
 along,
 Correctly free and regularly strong
 Nor scornful deem the effort out of
 place,
 With taste to reason and convince
 with grace,
 But ponder wisely, ere you know, too
 late,
 Contempt of trifles will not prove us
 great!
 The Cynics, not their tubs, respect
 engage,
 And dirty tunic never made a
 sage
 E'en Cato—had he own'd the Senate's
 will
 And wash'd his toga—had been
 Cato still (a)
 Justly we censure—yet are free to
 own,
 That indecision is a crime unknown
 For, never faltering, seldom reason-
 ing long,
 And still most positive whene'er
 most wrong,
 No theoretic sage is apt to fare
 Like Mah'met's coffin—hung in mid-
 dle air!
 No! fenc'd by Error's all-sufficient
 trust,
 These stalk "in nubibus"—those
 crawl in dust
 From their proud height, the first
 demand to know,
 If spiritual essence should descend
 more low?
 The last, as vainly, from their dung-
 hill, cry,

B P.

Can body's grossness hope t' aspire
 more high?
 And while Reflection's empire, these
 disclose,
 Sensation's sovereign right is told
 by those
 Lo! Berkeley proves an old hypothe-
 sis!
 "Out on the senses!" (he was out of
 his!)
 "All is idea! and nothing real springs
 But God, and Reason"—(not the
 right of kings?) (b)
 "Hold!" says Condillac with pro-
 found surprise—
 "Why prate of Reason? we have
 ears and eyes!"
 Condillac! while the dangerous peri-
 ods fall
 Upon thy page, to stamp sensation
all,
 While (coldly studious!) thine ingen-
 ious scroll (c)
 Endows the mimic statue with a soul
 Compos'd of sense—behold the gener-
 ous hound—
 His piercing eye, his ear awake to
 sound,
 His scent most delicate organ!
 and declare
 What triumph hath the "Art of
 Thinking" there! (d)
 What Gall, or Spurzheim, on his
 front hath sought
 The mystic bumps indicative of
 Thought?
 Or why, if Thought *do* there maintain
 her throne,
 Will reasoning curs leave logic for a
 bone?
 Mind is imprison'd in a lonesome
 tower
 Sensation is its window—hence herb,
 flower,
 Landscapes all sun, the rush of
 thousand springs
 Waft in sweet scents, fair sights,
 soft murmurings,
 And in her joy, she gazeth—yet ere
 long,
 Reason awaketh in her, bold and
 strong,
 And o'er the scene exerting secret
 laws,

C

First seeks th' efficient, then the final
cause,
Abstracts from forms their hidden
accidents,
And marks in outward substance,
inward sense

Our first perceptions formed—we
search, to find
The operations of the forming mind,
And turn within by Reason's certain
route,
To view the shadows of the things
without
Discern'd, retain'd, compar'd, com-
bin'd, and brought
To mere abstraction, by abstracting
Thought
Hence to discern, retain, compare,
connect,
We deem the faculties of Intellect,
The which, mus'd on, exert a new
controul,
And fresh ideas are open'd on the
soul

Sensation is a stream with dashing
spray,
That shoots in idle speed its arrowy
way,
When lo! the mill arrests its waters'
course,
Turning to use their unproductive
force
The cunning wheels by foamy cur-

And substance sensible alone have
been
Sensation's study, while reflective
Mind,
Essence unseen in objects seen may
find,
And, tracing whence her known
impressions came,
Give single forms an universal name
So, when particular sounds in con-
cord rise,
Those sounds as *melody*, we general-
ize,
When pleasing shapes and colours
blend, the soul
Abstracts th' idea of *beauty* from the
whole,
Deducting thus, by Mind's enchant-
ing spell,
The intellectual from the sensible
Hence bold Longinus' splendid peri-
ods grew,
" Who was himself the great sublime
he drew "
Hence Burke, the poet-reasoner,
learn'd to trace
His glowing style of energetic grace
Hence thoughts, perchance, some
favour'd bosoms move,
Which Price might own, and classic
Knight approve!
Go! light a rushlight, ere the day is
done,

Shall passive sufferance e'en to mind
 belong
 When right divine in man is human
 wrong ?
 Shall a high name a low idea enhance,
 When all may fail, as some succeed—
 by chance ?
 Shall fix'd chimeras unfix'd reason
 shock ?
 And if Locke err, must thousands
 err with Locke ?
 Men ! claim your charter ! spuin
 th' unjust controul,
 And shake the bondage from the
 free-born soul !
 Go walk the porticoes ! and teach
 your youth
 All names are bubbles, but the name
 of Truth !
 If fools, by chance, attend to Wis-
 dom's rules
 'Tis no dishonour to be right with
 fools
 If human faults to Plato's page be-
 long (f)
 Not ev'n with Plato, willingly go
 wrong
 But though the judging page declare
 it well
 To love Truth better than the lips
 which tell,
 Yet 'twere an error, with injustice
 class'd,
 T' adore the former, and neglect the
 last
 Oh ! beats there, Heav'n ! a heart of
 human frame,
 Whose pulses throb not at some
 kindling name ?
 Some sound, which brings high mus-
 ings in its track,
 Or calls perchance the days of child-
 hood back,
 In its dear echo,—when, without a
 sigh,
 Swift hoop, and bounding ball,
 were first laid by,
 To clasp in joy, from school-room
 tyrant, free,
 The classic volume on the little knee,
 And con sweet sounds of dearest
 minstrelsy,
 Or words of sterner lore, the young
 brow fraught
 With a calm brightness which might
 mimic thought,

Leant on the boyish hand—as, all the
 while,
 A half-heav'd sigh, or aye th' uncon-
 scious smile
 Would tell how, o'er that page, the
 soul was glowing,
 In an internal transport, past the
 knowing !
 How feelings, erst unfelt, did then
 appeal,
 Give forth a voice, and murmur,
 "We are here !"
 As lute-strings which a strong hand
 plays upon,
 Or Memnon's statue singing 'neath
 the sun (g)
 Ah me ! for such are pleasant mem-
 ories—
 And call the tears of fondness to our
 eyes
 Reposing on this gone-by dream—
 when thus,
 One mabled book was all the world
 to us,
 The gentlest bliss our innocent
 thoughts could find—
 The happiest cradle of our infant
 mind !
 And though such hours be past, we
 shall not less
 Think on their joy with grateful
 tenderness,
 And bless the page which bade our
 reason wake,—
 And love the prophet, for his mis-
 sion's sake
 But not alone doth Memory's smoul-
 dering flame
 Reflect a radiance on a glorious
 name,
 For there are names of pride, and
 they who bear
 Have walked with Truth, and turn'd
 their footsteps where
 We walk not—their beholdings aye
 have been
 O'er Mind's far countries which we
 have not seen—
 Our thoughts are not their thoughts !
 —and oft we dream
 That light upon the awful brow doth
 gleam,
 From that high converse, as when
 Moses trod
 Towards the people, from the mount
 of God,

His lips were silent, but his face was
bright,
And prostrate Israel trembled at the
sight

What tongue can syllable our Bacon's
name,
Nor own a heart exulting in his fame ?
Where prejudice wild blasts were
wont to blow,
And waves of ignorance roll'd dark
below,

He raised his sail—and left the coast
behind,—
Sublime Columbus of the realms of
Mind !

Dared folly's mists, opinion's treach-
erous sands,
And walk'd, with godlike step, th'
untrodden lands !
But ah ! our Muse of Britain, stand-
ing near, (*h*)
Hath dimm'd my tablet with a pen-
sive tear !

Thrice, the proud theme, her free-
born voice essays,—
And thrice that voice is faltering in
his praise—

Yea ! till her eyes in silent triumph
turn

To mark afar her Locke's sepulchral
urn !

Oh urn ! where students rapturous
vigils keep,

Where sages envy, and where patriots
weep !

Oh Name ! that bids my glowing
spirit wake—

To freemen's hearts endeared for
Freedom's sake !

Oh soul ! too bright in life's corrupt-
ing hour,

To rise by faction, or to crouch to
power !

While radiant Genius lifts her heav'n-
ward wing,

And human bosoms own the Mind I
sing,

While British writers British thoughts
record,

And England's press is fearless as her
sword,

While, 'mid the seas which gird our
favor'd isle,

She clasps her charter'd rights with
conscious smile,

So long be *thou* her glory, and her
guide,

Thy page her study, and thy name
her pride !

Oh ! ever thus, immortal Locke, be-
long

First to my heart, as noblest in my
song,

And since in thee, the muse enrap-
tured find

A moral greatness, and creating
mind

Still may thine influence, which
with honor'd light

Beams when I read, illumine me as I
write !

The page too guiltless, and the soul
too free,

To call a frown from Truth or blush
from thee !

But where Philosophy would fear to
soar,

Young Poesy's elastic steps explore !
Her fairy foot, her daring eye pur-
sues

The light of faith—nor trembles as
she views !

Wont o'er the Psalmist's holy harp
to hang,

And swell the sacred note when
Milton sang,

Mingling reflection's chords with
fancy's lays

The tones of music with the voice of
praise !

And while Philosophy, in spirit free,
Reasons, believes, yet cannot plainly

see,
Poetic Rapture, to her dazzled sight

Pourtrays the shadows of the things
of light,

Delighting o'er the unseen worlds to
roam,

And waft the pictures of perfection
home

Thus Reason oft the aid of fancy
seeks,

And strikes Pierian chords—when
Irving speaks ! (*i*)

Oh ! silent be the withering tongue of
those

Who call each page, bereft of
measure, prose,

Who deem the Muse possess of such
faint spells,

That like poor fools, she glories in her <i>bells</i> ,	In seeking Nature's language—poetry
Who hear her voice alone in tinkling chime,	When Hope, in soft perspective, from afar,
And find a line's whole magic in its rhyme,	Sees lovely scenes more lovely than they are,
Forgetting, if the gilded shrine be fair, What purer spirit may inhabit there !	To deck the landscape, tiptoe Fancy brings
For such,—indignant at her ques- tioned might,	Her plastic shapes, and bright imagings
Let Genius cease to charm—and Scott to write !	Or when man's breast by torturing pangs is stung,
Ungrateful Plato ! o'er thy cradled rest, (7)	If fearful silence cease t' enchain his tongue,
The Muse hath hung, and all her love expressed,	In metaphor, the feelings seek relief, And all the soul grows eloquent with grief
Thy first imperfect accents fondly taught,	Poetic fire, like Vesta's, pure and bright,
And warm'd thy visions with poetic thought !	Should draw from Nature's sun, its holy light
Ungrateful Plato ! should her deadli- est foe	With Nature, should the musing poet roam,
Be found within the breast she tended so ?	And steal instruction from her classic tome,
Spoil'd of her laurels, should she weep to find	When 'neath her guidance, least inclin'd to err—
The best belov'd become the most unkind ?	The ablest painter when he copies <i>her</i> Beloved Shakespeare ! England's dearest fame !
And was it well or generous, Brutus like,	Dead is the breast that swells not at thy name !
To pierce the hand that gave the power to strike ?	Whether thine Ariel skim the seas along,
Sages, by reason, reason's powers direct,	Floating on wings ethereal as his song—
Bards, through the heart, convince the intellect	Lear rave amid the tempest—or Macbeth
Philosophy majestic brings to view Mind's perfect modes, and fair pro- portions too,	Question the hags of hell on midnight heath—
Enchanting Poesy bestows the while, Upon its sculptured grace, her magic smile,	Immortal Shakespeare ! still, thy lips impart
Bids the cold form, with living radi- ance glow,	The noblest comment on the human heart
And stamps existence on its marble brow !	And as fair Eve, in Eden newly placed, (8)
For Poesy's whole essence, when de- fined,	Gazed on her form, in limpid waters traced,
Is elevation of the reasoning mind, When inward sense from Fancy's page is taught,	And stretch'd her gentle arms, with pleased surprise,
And moral feeling ministers to Thought	To meet the image of her own bright eyes—
And hence, the natural passions all agree	So Nature, on thy magic page, sur- veys Her sportive graces, and untutored ways !

AN ESSAY ON MIND

Wondering, the soft reflection doth she see,	Think not his Fancy builds her elfin dream
Then laughing owns she loves herself in thee !	On painted floweret, or on sighing stream
Shun not the haunts of crowded cities then	No single objects cause his raptured starts,
Nor e'er, as man forget to study men !	For Mind is narrow'd, not inspir'd by parts,
What though the tumult of the town intrude	But o'er the scene the poet's spirit broods
On the deep silence, and the lofty mood,	To warm the thoughts that form his noblest moods,
'Twill make thy human sympathies rejoice,	Peopling his solitude with faery play,
To hear the music of a human voice—	And beckoning shapes that whisper him away,—
To watch strange brows by various reason wrought,	While lily'd fields, and hedge-row blossoms white
To claim the interchange of thought with thought,	And hills, and glittering streams, are full in sight—
T' associate mind with mind, for Mind's own weal	The forests wave, the joyous sun beguiles,
As steel is ever sharpen'd best by steel	And all the poetry of Nature smiles !
T' impassion'd bards, the scenic world is dear,—	Such poetry is formed by Mind, and not
But Nature's glorious masterpiece is here !	By scenic grace of one peculiar spot
All poetry is beauty, but exprest	The artist lingers in the moon-lit glade, (1)
In inward essence, not in outward vest	And light and shade, with him, are—light and shade
Hence lovely scenes, reflective poets find	The philosophic chymist wandering there,
Awake their lovelier images in Mind	Dreams of the soil, and nature of the air
Nor doth the pictur'd earth, the bard invite,	The rustic marks the young herbs' fresh'ning hue,
The lake of azure, or the heav'n of light,	And only thinks—his scythe may soon pass through !
But that his swelling breast arouses there,	None " muse on nature with a Poet's eye,"
Something less visible, and much more fair !	None read, but Poets, Nature's poetry !
There is a music in the landscape round,—	Its characters are trac'd in mystic hand,
A silent voice, that speaks without a sound—	And all may gaze, but few can understand
A witching spirit, that reposing near,	Nor here alone the Poet's dwelling rear,
Breathes to the heart, but comes not to the ear !	Though Beauty's voice perchance is sweetest here !
These softly steal, his kindling soul t' embrace,	Bind not his footsteps to the sylvan scene,
And natural beauty, gild with moral grace	To heathy banks, fair woods, and valleys green,
Think not, when summer breezes tell their tale,	When Mind is all his own ! her dear impress
The poet's thoughts are with the summer gale,	

<p>Shall throw a magic o'er the wilder- ness As o'er the blossoming vale, and aye recall Its shadowy plane, and silver water- fall, Or sleepy crystal pool, reposing by, To give the earth a picture of the sky ! Such, gazed on by the spirit, are, I ween, Lovelier than ever prototype was seen , For Fancy teacheth Memory's hand to trace (m) Nature's ideal form in Nature's place In every theme by lofty Poet sung, The thought should seem to speak, and not the tongue When godlike Milton lifts th' exalted song, The subject bears the burning words along— Resounds the march of Thought, th' overflowing line, Full cadence, solemn pause, and strength divine ! When Horace chats his neighbour's faults away, The sportive measures, like his muse, are gay , For once Good-humour Satire's by- way took, And all his soul is laughing in his book ! On moral Pope's didactic page is found, Sound rul'd by sense, and sense made clear by sound , The power to reason, and the taste to please, While, as the subject varies in degrees, He stoops with dignity, and soars with ease Hence let our Poets, with discerning glance, Forbear to imitate the stage of France What though Corneille arouse the thrilling chords, And walk with Genius o'er th' in- spired boards , What though his rival bring, with calmer grace, The classic unities of time and place,—</p>	<p>All polish, and all eloquence—'twere mean To leave the path of Nature for Racine , When Nero's parent, 'midst her woe, defines The wrong that tortures—in two hundred lines Or when Orestes, madden'd by his crime, Forgets life, joy, and every thing— but rhyme While thus to character and na- ture, true, Still keep the harmony of verse in view, Yet not in changeless concord,—it should be Though graceful, nervous—musical, though free , Not clogg'd by useless drapery, not beset By the superfluous word, or epithet, Wherein Conception only dies in state, (n) As Draco, smother'd by the gar- ments' weight— But join, Amphion-like (whose magic fire Won the deep music of the Maian lyre, To call Bœotia's city from the ground), The just in structure, with the sweet in sound Nor this the whole—the poet's classic strain May flow in smoothest numbers, yet in vain , And Taste may please, and Fancy sport awhile, And yet Aonia's muse refuse to smile ! For lo ! her heavenly lips these words reveal— “ The sage may coldly <i>think</i>, the bard must <i>feel</i> ! And if his writings, to his heart un- true, Would ape the fervent throb it never knew , If generous deeds, and Virtue's no- blest part, And Freedom's voice, could never warm that heart ,</p>
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If Interest tax'd the produce of the
brain,
And fetter'd Genius follow'd in her
train,
Weeping as each unwilling word she
spoke,—
Then hush the lute—its master string
is broke !
In vain, the skilful hand may linger
o'er—
Concord is dead, and music speaks no
more ! "

There are, and have been such—they
were forgot
If shame could veil their page, if tears
could blot !
There are, and have been, whose dis-
honour'd lay
Aspired t' enrapture that the world
might—pay !
Whose life was one long bribe, oft
counted o'er,—
Brib'd to think on, and brib'd to
think no more,
Brib'd to laugh, weep, nor ask the
reason why,
Brib'd to tell truth, and brib'd to gild
a lie !
Oh Man ! for this, the sensual left be-
hind,
We boast our empire o'er the vast of
Mind ?
Oh Mind ! reported valueless, till
sold,
Thought dross till metamorphos'd
into gold
By Midas' touch—breath'st thou
immortal verse
To throw a ducat in an empty purse—
To walk the market at a bellman's
cry,
For knaves to sell, and wond'ring
fools to buy ?
Can Heav'n-born bards, undone by
lucre's lust,
Crouch thus, like Heav'n-born min-
isters, to dust ?
Alas ! to dust indeed—yet wherefore
blame ?
They keep their profits, though they
lose their fame

Leave to the dross they seek, the
grovelling throng,
And swell with nobler aim th' Aonian
song !

Enough for thee uninfluenc'd and
unhird,
If Truth reward the strain herself in-
spir'd !
Enough for thee, if grateful Man com-
mend,
If Genius love, and Virtue call thee
friend !
Enough for thee, to wake th' exalted
mood,
Reprove the erring, and confirm the
good,
Excite the tender smile, the generous
tear,
Or rouse the thought to loftiest Na-
ture dear,
Which rapturous greets amidst the
fervent line,
Thy name, O Freedom ! glorious Hel-
las, thine !

I love my own dear land—it doth re-
joice
The soul, to stretch my arms, and lift
my voice,
To tell her of my love ! I love her
green
And bowery woods, her hills in mossy
sheen,
Her silver running waters—there's no
spot
In all her dwelling, which my breast
loves not—
No place not heart-enchanted ! Sun-
nier skies,
And calmer waves, may meet an-
other's eyes,
I love the sullen mist, the stormy sea,
The winds of rushing strength which,
like the land, are free !
Such is my love—yet turning thus to
thee,
Oh Græcia ! I must hail with hardly
less
Of joy, and pride, and deepening ten-
derness,
And feelings wild, I know not to con-
troul,
My other country—country of my
soul !
For so, to me, thou art ! my lips have
sung
Of thee with childhood's lisp, and
harp unstrung !
In thee, my Fancy's pleasant walks
have been,

Telling her tales, while Memory wept
between !
And now *for* thee ! joy, with heart
beguiled,
As if a dying friend looked up, and
smiled

Lo ! o'er Ægæa's waves, the shout
hath ris'n !
Lo ! Hope hath burst the fetters of
her prison !
And Glory sounds the trump along
the shore,
And Freedom walks where Freedom
walk'd before !
Ipsara glimmers with heroic light,
Redd'ning the waves that lash her
flaming height,
And Ægypt hurries from that dark
blue sea !
Lo ! o'er the cliffs of fam'd Ther-
mopylæ,
And voiceful Marathon, the wild
winds sweep,
Bearing this message to the brave
who sleep—
" They come ! they come ! with their
embattled shock,
From Pelion's steep, and Paros' foam-
dash'd rock !
They come from Tempe's vale, and
Helicon's spring,
And proud Eurotas' banks, the river
king !
They come from Leuctra, from the
waves that kiss
Athena—from the shores of Salamis,
From Sparta, Thebes, Eubœa's hills
of blue—
To live with Hellas—or to sleep with
you ! "

Smile—smile, beloved land ! and
though no lay
From Doric pipe, may charm thy
glades to-day—
Though dear Ionic music murmur not
Adown the vale—its echo all forgot !
Yet smile, beloved land ! for soon,
around,
Thy silent earth shall utter forth a
sound,
As whilom—and, its pleasant groves
among,
The Grecian voice shall breathe the
Grecian song,

While the exiled muse shall 'habit
still
The happy haunts of her Parnassian
hill
Till then, behold the cold dumb
sepulchre—
The ruin'd column—ocean, earth,
and air,
Man, and his wrongs—thou hast
Tyrtæus there ! (o)

And pardon, if across the heaving
main,
Sound the far melody of minstrel
strain,
In wild and fitful gust from England's
shore,
For *his* immortal sake, who never
more
Shall tread with living foot, and spirit
free,
Her fields, or breathe her passionate
poetry—
The pilgrim bard, who lived, and died
for thee,
Oh land of Memory ! loving thee no
less
Than parent—with the filial tender-
ness,
And holy ardour of the Argive son,
Straining each nerve to bear thy
chariot on—
Till when its wheels the place of glory
swept,
He laid him down before the shrine
—and slept (p)

So be it ! at his cold unconscious bier,
We fondly sate, and dropp'd the
natural tear—
Yet wept not wisely, for he sank to
rest
On the dear earth his waking thoughts
loved best,
And gently life's last pulses stole
away !
No Moschus sang a requiem o'er his
clay, (q)
But Greece was sad ! and breathed
above, below,
The warrior's sigh, the silence, and
the woe !

And is this all ? Is this the little
sum
For which we toil—to which our
glories come ?

Doth History bend her mouldering
 pages o'er,
 And Science stretch her bulwark from
 the shore,
 And Sages search the mystic paths of
 Thought,
 And Poets charm with lays that
 Genius taught—
 For this ' to labour through their
 little day,
 To weep an hour, then want the tear
 they pay—
 To ask the urn, their death and life
 to tell,
 When the dull dust would give that
 tale as well !

Man ! hast thou seen the gallant
 vessel sweep,
 Borrowing her moonlight from the
 jealous deep,
 And gliding with mute foot, and silver
 wing,
 Over the waters like a soul-mov'd
 thing ?
 Man, hast thou gazed on this—then
 look'd again,
 And seen no speck on all that desolate
 main,
 And heard no sound,—except the
 gurgling cry,
 The winds half stifled in their mock-
 ery ?

Woe unto thee ! for, thus, thy course
 is run
 And, in the fulness of thy noon-day
 sun,
 The darkness cometh—yea ! thou
 walk'st abroad
 In glory, Child of Mind, Creation's
 Lord—
 And wisdom's music from thy lips
 hath gush'd !
 Then comes the *Selah* ! and the voice
 is hush'd, (r)
 And the light past ! we seek where
 thou hast been
 In beauty—but thy beauty is not
 seen !
 We breathe the air thou breath'd'st,
 we tread the spot
 Thy feet were wont to tread, but find
 thee not !
 Beyond, sits Darkness with her hag-
 gard face,

Brooding fiend-like above thy bury-
 ing-place—
 Beneath, let wildest Fancy take her fill !
 Shall we seek on ? we shudder, and
 are still !
 Yet woe not unto thee, thou child of
 Earth !
 Though moonlight sleep on thy
 deserted hearth,
 We will not cry "Alas !" above thy
 clay !
 It was, perchance, thy joyous pride
 to stray
 On Mind's lone shore, and linger by
 the way
 But now thy pilgrim's staff is laid
 aside,
 And on thou journeyest o'er the sul-
 len tide,
 To bless thy wearied sight, and glad
 thine heart
 With all that Mind's serenest skies
 impart ,
 Where Wisdom suns the day no
 shades destroy,
 And Learning ends in Truth, as hope
 in joy
 While *we* stand mournful on the
 desert beach,
 And wait, and wish, thy distant bark,
 to reach,
 And weep to watch it, passing from
 our sight,
 And sound the gun's salute, and sigh
 our last "good-night !"

And oh ! while thus the spirit
 glides away,—
 Give to the world its memory with its
 clay !
 Some page our country's grateful eyes
 may scan ,
 Some useful truth to bless surviving
 man ,
 Some name to honest bosoms justly
 dear ,
 Some grave t' exalt the thought, and
 claim the tear ,
 So when the pilgrim Sun is travelling
 o'er
 The last blue hill, to gild a distant
 shore,
 He leaves a freshness in the evening
 scene,
 That tells Creation where his steps
 have been !

NOTES TO BOOK I

NOTE (a)

And peeps at glory from some ancient's back

"The reason which the learned Bentley gave his daughter for not himself becoming an original writer, instead of wasting his talents on the works of others, is probably the cause of many not attempting original composition Bentley seemed embarrassed at her honest question, and remained for a considerable time thoughtful At length he observed—'Child, I am sensible I have not always turned my talents to the proper use for which they were given me, yet I have done something but the wit and genius of the old authors beguiled me, and as I despaired of raising myself up to their standard upon fair ground, I thought the only chance I had of looking over their heads was to get upon their shoulders'"—*Curiosities of Literature*, Vol I

NOTE (b)

*The gentle Cowley of our native clime,
Lisp'd his first accents in Aoman rhyme*

A volume of Cowley's poems was published in his fifteenth year, and contains "The Tragical History of Pyramus and Thisbe," written in his tenth

NOTE (c)

*Alfieri's startling muse tun'd not her
strings,
And dumbly look'd "unutterable things"
Till when five lustrums o'er his head had
past,*

This Poet's great mind exhibited no precocity His 'Cleopatra,' written at the age of twenty-five years, first discovered its author's dramatic genius to himself, and to the world ["Six lustrums" in text here corrected by authoress to "five"]

NOTE (d)

*See, in that breathless crowd, Olorus stand,
While one fair boy hangs, list'ning, on his
hand—*

The young Thucydides!

It is said that Thucydides, in early youth, was present at the Olympic games when Herodotus recited his History, and that a burst of tears spoke his admiration "Take care of that boy!" observed the sage turning to Olorus, "he will one day make a great man!"

NOTE (e)

That hail "th' eternal city" in their pride

"Imperium sine fine dedi," says Virgil's Jupiter How little did the writer of

those four words dream of their surviving the Glory, whose eternity they were intended to predict! Horace too, in the most exulting of his odes, boldly proclaims that his fame will live as long as

"Capitolium

Scandet cum tacita virgine Pontifex"

Yes! his fame *will live!*—but where now is the Pontifex, and the silent vestal? where now is the Capitol? Such passages are, to my mind, pre eminently more affecting than all the ruins in the world!

NOTE (f)

And ultra Mitford soar'd to libel Greece.

Mr Mitford's acknowledged learning, and accuracy in detail, have a claim on our consideration, which we admit with readiness and pleasure, but prejudices, arising probably from early habits and associations, have deformed his work. He is evidently so afraid of taking the mob for the people, that he constantly takes the people for the mob—a perversion much in vogue among despots of Europe, in the nineteenth century He considers the Athenian Democracy as he would a classical kind of Radicalism, and generously endows Philip of Macedon with a "right divine," not only over his own possessions, but over those of his neighbours Mr Mitford lets his readers look at facts but, whether shortsighted as himself or not, he will not allow them to enjoy that privilege unless they make use of his political glasses, which, by the way, are No 20,—"ne plus ultra!"

NOTE (g)

*But lean on Reason, as your safest rule
Let doubtful facts, with patient hand, be led,
To take their place on this Procrustean bed!*

We shall find some clever and animated observations on this subject, in Voltaire's preface to his "Charles XII" I should extract them, but the book is too well known for me to doubt their having come to the knowledge of most readers and a new publication is perhaps the only place, in which we are not glad to meet an old acquaintance

NOTE (h)

Enlighten'd Miller of our modern days!

Those who may think this praise excessive are referred to the "Philosophy of Modern History," given to the world by Dr Miller, and thence are requested to judge of the reality of the merit

NOTE (i).

*The whispered sound, which stole on Descartes' ear,
Hallowing the sunny visions of his youth
With that eternal mandate, "Search for
Truth!"*

"Descartes, when young, and in a country seclusion, his brain exhausted by meditation, and his imagination heated to excess, heard a voice in the air which called him to pursue the search of Truth: he never doubted the vision, and this dream, in the delirium of Genius, charmed him even in his after studies."—*D'Israeli's "Literary Character."*

NOTE (j).

*He died, the glorious! who, with soaring
sight,
Sought some new world, to plant his foot of
might;*

Archimedes wrote to Hiero, that, if he had another world to stand on, he could move this by the power of his machinery. When Cicero stumbled on his grave, he found it, "Septum undique et vestitum vepribus et dumetis." What a homily!

NOTE (k).

*So hard to bear, with unobstructed sight,
Th' excess of darkness, or th' extreme of
light.*

Gray ingeniously asks, "Must I plunge into metaphysics?" (he might in some cases have said history)—"Alas! I cannot see in the dark; Nature has not furnished me with the optics of a cat. Must I pore upon mathematics? Alas! I cannot see in too much light; I am no eagle."

NOTE (l).

*So Buffon erred; amidst his chilling dream,
The judgment grew material as the theme:*

Buffon was a materialist upon principle, though a Catholic by observance. Upon reading a poem on the immortality of the soul, he exclaimed—"Religion would be a noble present if this were true."

NOTE (m).

*Sternly they strove—th' unequal race was
run!*

Leibnitz attacked with violence Sir Isaac Newton's opinion, that the seeds of mortality would be developed in the fabric of the universe if unrenewed by its divine Maker. Such an opinion he considered "impious;" and, in opposition to it, maintained, that as Creation proceeded from the hand of Perfection, it is perfect—and as perfect, immutable.

NOTE (n).

Devoted Southey! if thou had'st not tried!

Few are ready to bear a more respectful tribute to Dr. Southey's poetical talents than the writer of this Work, who however begs to be allowed to admire his genius, without extending that admiration either to his politics or Hexameters.

NOTE (o).

*Dwell not on parts! for parts contract the
mind;*

Lord Bacon thus expresses himself—"Sciences distinguished have a dependence upon universal knowledge, to be augmented, and rectified by the superior light thereof; as well as the parts and members of a science have upon the maxims of the same science, and the mutual light and consent which one part receiveth of another."—*Interpretatio Naturæ.*

NOTE (p).

For too much learning maketh no man mad!

Perhaps, after all, the great danger of knowing is in not knowing enough; and certainly "il pie fermo" is not "il piu basso." "It is true," says Lord Bacon, "that a little philosophy inclineth men's minds to atheism, but depth in philosophy bringeth their minds about to religion." This is an acute observation, and if generalized will be found equally so. The errors attending Intellectual Elevation I have alluded to and allowed; but that elevation is only comparative. "Alps on Alps arise!" and the *ars longa vita brevis* prevents our attaining the topmost height. In our progress towards it then is our risk—lest we rejoice to have gone a yard, without remembering we have a mile to go. Like the princess, in the pretty Arabian tale, who was ascending the mountain in search of her talking bird and golden water, if during the ascent we turn back to gaze, we are transformed into black stones—capable of impeding others, though not of advancing ourselves.

NOTE (q).

*The sage how learned! and the man how
meek!*

The character of Sir Isaac Newton forms a sublime comment on the foregoing note. "I don't know," said that greatest and humblest of men, "what I may seem to the world; but as to myself, I seem to have been only like a boy playing on the sea-shore, and diverting myself in now and then finding a smoother pebble, or a prettier shell than ordinary, whilst the

great ocean of Truth lay all undiscovered before me"—We find the anecdote in Spence

NOTES TO BOOK II

NOTE (a)

*E'en Cato—had he own'd the Senate's will,
And wash'd his toga—had been Cato still*

Plutarch relates that Cato Uticensis was thought to disgrace the Prætorship by the meanness of his dress To couple "disgrace" with the name of Cato revolts the soul, and yet who would call his "exigua toga" a *proof* of the loftiness of his virtue, or think him less a patriot if he had kept on his shoes?

NOTE (b)

*"All is idea" and nothing real springs
But God, and Reason—" (not the right of kings?)*

An obvious question Pyrrho the Elean, founder of the Ideal Philosophy, on the near approach of carts and carriages, did not think it worth while to turn aside, or change his posture Dr Berkeley, with less consistency, but more prudence, found time (and conscience) to write three sermons in vindication of passive obedience

NOTE (c)

*While (coldly studious) thine ingenuous
scroll*

*Endows the mimic statue with a soul
Compos'd of sense—*

It is the object of Condillac's work, "Sur la Sensation," to prove "que la reflexion n'est dans son principe que la sensation meme," and that our ideas are only sensation transformed His statue is very cleverly put together, but is a statue after all

NOTE (d)

*What triumph hath the "Art of Thinking"
there!*

"L'Art de Penser"—title to one of Condillac's works

NOTE (e)

*To judge is yours!—then why submissive
call,*

"The master said so?"

An "argumentum ad verecundiam" used by the Pythagoreans I so much admire a passage in Plato's Phædo, illustrative of these lines, that the reader must forgive my referring to it Cebes supports with animation an opinion in opposition to Socrates, who, turning a gratified countenance ("ἡσθηναι τε μοι εἶδε," says the narrator) to his other

disciples, benignly observes—"Cebes always looks into principles, neither will he admit, without examination, the sentiments of any man"

We find in Dr Reid the following striking precept—"Let us, as becomes philosophers, lay aside authority"

NOTE (f)

*If human faults to Pato's page belong,
Not ev'n with Plato, willingly go wrong*

Cicero's assertion, "errare mehercule malo cum Platone quam cum istis vera sentire" is more boldly said than singularly thought How many are there, among the canaille of readers, prepared to praise an inferior volume, with the Waverley magic on its title page to commend a commonplace by Rogers, or a far fetched allusion by Moore? Even among the more critical of us, have the names of Scott, and Moore, and Rogers, no secret influence? Do we not so devoutly admire the noisy slippered Venus, that at length we begin to reverence abstractedly, the noisy slippers? This is so, and I will not quarrel with it, since to forget the trifling faults of a great writer, is the gratitude we owe to his perfections But what, in subjects of taste and sentiment, may be tolerated as pardonable enthusiasm, must in grave discussion, be condemned as unpardonable weakness If therefore we judge Cicero only by the above-cited passage, we shall pronounce him to be a good Platonist (in one sense of the word), but a very bad philosopher It is not with him, "Amicus Plato sed magis amica veritas" he loves truth less than he loves Plato

NOTE (g)

Or Memnon's statue singing 'neath the sun

The statue of Memnon, the Ethiopian king, was said to utter musical sounds at the rising of the sun Strabo witnessed this singular phenomenon, but could only explain it by conjecture

NOTE (h)

*But, ah! our Muse of Britain, standing near,
Hath dimm'd my tablet with a pensive tear!*

It is a practice too common, but manifestly unjust, to visit on the memory of distinguished authors their individual failings I wish therefore to state expressly, that the Muse of Britain is not here supposed to animadvert on Lord Bacon's character as a statesman with which she has nothing to do in this place It is with regard to his writings that I cannot avoid expressing a regret, and I do so reverentially, that pages so glorious

should be polluted by passages so servile. "As men, we share his fame"—as Englishmen, we feel his degradation. If indeed the "Novum Organum," and "Advancement of Learning," kindled our souls into a less proud consciousness of intellectual dignity, we might better brook hearing a king called "a mortal god upon earth," and James the First compared to Solomon. But Lord Bacon first teaches us how high Philosophy can soar, and then how low a philosopher can stoop.

NOTE (i).

And strikes Pierian chords—when Irving speaks!

There is a pleasure in being benefitted by the labours of Genius: there is a pride in possessing powers capable of benefiting. The pride Mr. Irving may justly feel; and which of his readers, or hearers, cannot boast the pleasure? It gratifies me to be enabled to express in this place my admiration of his talents, and my respect for their direction.

NOTE (j).

*Ungrateful Plato! o'er thy cradled rest,
The Muse hath hung, and all her love
express;*

Plato wrote poetry in his youth; and when indeed did not Plato write poetry? Longinus numbers him among the imitators of Homer—"Πάντων δὲ τούτων μάλιστα ὁ Πλάτων ἀπὸ τοῦ Ὀμηρικοῦ ἐκείνου νόματος εἰς αὐτὸν μυρίας ὅσας παρατρόπας ἀποχτευσάμενος."

NOTE (k).

*And as fair Eve, in Eden newly placed,
Gazed on her form, in limpid waters traced,*

The reader will here perceive an allusion to that beautiful passage in "Paradise Lost," book the fourth, where Eve describes to Adam her emotions on first beholding her own reflection in "the clear smooth lake"—

"A shape within the watery gleam appeared,
Bending to look on me—I started back—
It started back," etc.

NOTE (l).

*The artist lingers in the moon-lit glade,
And light and shade, with him, are—light
and shade.*

"Quam multa vident Pictores in umbris et eminentia quæ nos non videmus," is the motto to Mr. Price's admirable essay on the Picturesque. Dugald Stewart proposes its reversion—"Quam multa videmus nos quæ Pictores non vident," which if it be as true as ingenious, will go a great way in assisting my position.

NOTE (m).

_____ to trace
Nature's ideal form in Nature's place.

Lord Bacon says of Poetry, that "it was ever thought to have some participation of divineness, because it doth raise and erect the mind, by submitting the shews of things to the desires of the mind; whereas Reason doth buckle and bow the mind unto the nature of things."—*Advancement of Learning*, Book 2.

NOTE (n).

*Wherein Conception only dies in state,
As Draco, smother'd by the garments'
weight—*

The Athenian People being accustomed to testify their approbation by the casting of their garments on the approved individual, Draco was honourably smothered through excess of popularity.

NOTE (o).

_____ behold the cold dumb sepulchre—
*The ruin'd column—ocean, earth, and air,
Man, and his wrongs—thou hast Tyrtæus
there!*

The inspiring effect of the productions of this Greek Poet, during the war between the Lacedæmonians and Messenians, is well known.

NOTE (p).

*He laid him down before the shrine—and
slept.*

Herodotus relates of Cleobis and Bito, Argive brothers, that on a festival of Juno they themselves, in default of oxen, drew the chariot of the priestess, their mother, forty-five stadia to the temple. Amidst the shouts of an admiring multitude, their grateful parent asked of the gods the best boon mortals could receive, wherewith to reward the piety of her sons. The young men fell asleep within the temple, and woke no more.

NOTE (q).

*No Moschus sang a requiem o'er his clay,
That exquisite effusion of Moschus over
the grave of Bion, his "vatis amici"—
his brother in poetry and love—will occur
to the reader's recollection.*

NOTE (r).

*Then comes the Selah! and the voice is
hush'd,*

Respecting this Hebrew word, which is found "seventy times in the Psalms, and three times in Habakkuk," Calmet observes—"One conjecture is, that it means the end or a pause, and that the ancient musicians put it occasionally in the margin of their psalters, to shew where a musical pause was to be made, and where the tune ended."

MISCELLANEOUS POEMS

1826

TO MY FATHER ON HIS BIRTH-DAY

"Causa fuit Pater his"—*Hor*

AMIDST the days of pleasant mirth,
That throw their halo round our
earth,

Amidst the tender thoughts that rise
To call bright tears to happy eyes,
Amidst the silken words that move
To syllable the names we love,
There glides no day of gentle bliss
More soothing to the heart than *this* !
No thoughts of fondness e'er appear
More fond, than those I write of here !
No name can e'er on tablet shine,
My father ! more beloved than *thine* !

'Tis sweet, adown the shady past,
A lingering look of love to cast—
Back th' enchanted world to call,
That beamed around us first of all,
And walk with Memory fondly o'er
The paths where Hope had been be-
fore—

Sweet to receive the sylphic sound
That breathes in tenderness around,
Repeating to the listening ear
The names that made our childhood
dear—

For parted Joy, like Echo, kind,
Will leave her dulcet voice behind,
To tell, amidst the magic air,
How oft she smiled and lingered there
Oh ! let the deep Aonian shell
Breathe the tuneful numbers, clear and
well,

While the glad Hours, in fair array,
Lead on this buxom Holiday,
And Time, as on his way he springs,
Hates the last bard who gave him
wings,

For 'neath thy gentleness of praise,
My Father ! rose my early lays !

And when the lyre was scarce awake,
I loved its strings for *thy* loved sake,
Wooded the kind Muses—but the while
Thought only how to win thy smile—
My proudest fame—my dearest
pride—

More dear than all the world beside !

And now, perchance, I seek the tone
For magic that is more its own,
But still my Father's looks remain
The best Mæcenas of my strain,
My gentlest joy, upon his brow
To read the smile, that meets me
now—

To hear him, in his kindness, say
The words—perchance he'll speak to-
day !

SPENSERIAN STANZAS

ON A BOY OF THREE YEARS OLD

CHILD of the sunny lockes and
beautifull brow !

In thoughtfull tendernes I gaze
on thee—

Upon thy dainty cheek Expres-
sion's glow

Daunceth in tyme to thine heart's
melodie,

Ne mortall wight mote lovelier
urchin see !

Nathlesse it teens this pensive brest
of mine

To think—believe the innocent
revelrie

Shall be eclipsed in those soft blue
eyne—

Whenso the howre of youth no more
for thee shall shine

Ah me ! eftsoons thy childhood's
pleasaunt dais

Shall fly away, and be a whilome
thing !

And sweetest mearimake, and
birthday lais

Be recked not of, except when
memories bring

Feres to their embers with awaking
wing,

To make past love rejoyce thy
tender sprite,

Albert the toyles of daunger thee
enring !

Child of the wavy lockes and brow
of light—

Then be thy conscience pure, as *now*
thy face is bright

VERSES TO MY BROTHER

"For we were nursed upon the self same hill"
—*Lycidas*

I WILL write down thy name, and
when 'tis writ,
Will turn me from the hum that
mortals keep
In the wide world without, and gaze
on it!
It telleth of the past—calling from
sleep
Such dear, yet mournful thoughts, as
make us smile, and weep

Belov'd and best! what thousand
feelings start,
As o'er the paper's course my fin-
gers move—
My brother! dearest, kindest as
thou art!
How can these lips my heart's
affection prove?
I could not speak the words, if
words could speak my love

Together have we passed our in-
fant hours,
Together sported Childhood's
spring away
Together culled young Hope's fast
budding flowers,
To wreath the forehead of each
coming day!
Yes! for the present's sun makes e'en
the future gay

And when the laughing mood was
nearly o'er,
Together, many a minute did we
wile
On Horace' page, or Maro's sweeter
lore,
While one young critic, on the
classic style,
Would sagely try to frown, and make
the other smile

But now alone thou con'st the
ancient tome—
And sometimes thy dear studies,
it may be,
Are crossed by dearer dreams of
me and home!
Alone I muse on Homer—thoughts
are free—
And if mine often stray, they go in
search of thee!

I may not praise thee *here*—I will
not bless!

Yet all thy goodness doth my mem-
ory bear,
Cherished by more than Friend-
ship's tenderness—
And in the silence of my evening
prayer,
Thou shalt not be forgot—thy dear
name shall be there!

STANZAS ON THE DEATH OF
LORD BYRON

— *λεγε πασιν απωλετο* — *Bion*

—"I am not now
That which I have been"—*Childe Harold*
He *was*, and *is* not! Græcia's
trembling shore,
Sighing through all her palmy
groves, shall tell
That Harold's pilgrimage at last
is o'er—
Mute the impassioned tongue, and
tuneful shell,
That erst was wont in noblest
strains to swell—
Hushed the proud shouts that rode
Ægea's wave!
For lo! the great Deliv'rer breathes
farewell!
Gives to the world his mem'ry and
a grave—
Expiring in the land he only lived to
save!

Mourn, Hellas, mourn! and o'er
thy widow'd brow,
For aye, the cypress wreath of sor-
row twine,
And in thy new-form'd beauty,
desolate, throw
The fresh-cull'd flowers on *his*
sepulchral shrine
Yes! let that heart whose fervour
was all thine,
In consecrated urn lamented be!
That generous heart where genius
thrill'd divine,
Hath spent its last most glorious
throb for thee,
Then sank amid the storm that made
thy children free!

Britannia's Poet! Græcia's hero,
sleeps!
And Freedom, bending o'er the
breathless clay,

Lifts up her voice, and in her
anguish weeps !
For us, a night hath clouded o'er
our day,
And hush'd the lips that breath'd
our fairest lay
Alas ! and must the British lyre
resound
A requiem, while the spirit wings
away
Of him who on its strings such
music found,
And taught its startling chords to
give so sweet a sound !
The theme grows sadder—but my
soul shall find
A language in these tears ! No
more—no more !
Soon, 'midst the shriekings of the
tossing wind,
The "dark blue depths" he sang
of, shall have bore
Our *all* of Byron to his native shore !
His grave is thick with voices—to
the ear
Murm'ring an awful tale of great-
ness o'er,
But Memory strives with Death,
and lingering near,
Shall consecrate the dust of Harold's
lonely bier !

MEMORY

My Fancy's steps have often strayed
To some fair vale the hills have made,
Where sparkling waters travel o'er,
And hold a murmur to the shore,
Winding with murmurings in and out,
To find the flowers which grow about
And there, perchance, in childhood
bold,
Some little elf, four summers old,
Adown the vales may chance to run,
To hunt his shadow in the sun !
But when the waters meet his eyes,
He starts and stops with glad surprise,
And shouts, with merry voice, to view
The banks of green, the skies of blue,
Th' inverted flocks that bleating go,
Lilies, and trees of apple blow,
Seeming so beautiful below !
He peeps above—he glances round,
And then looks down, and thinks he's
found
Reposing in the stream, to woo one,
A world ev'n lovelier than the true one

B P

Thus, with visions gay and light,
Hath Fancy lov'd my page to dight,
Yet Thought hath, through a vista,
seen

Something less frivolous, I ween
Then, while my chatting pen runs on,
I'll tell you what she dreamt upon

Memory's the streamlet of the scene,
Which sweeps the hills of Life be-
tween,

And, when our walking hour is past,
Upon its shore we rest at last,
And love to view the waters fair,
And see lost joys depicted there

My —, when thy feet are led
To press those banks we all must
tread—

May Virtue's smile and Learning's
praise

Adorn the waters to thy gaze,
And, o'er their lucid course, be lent
The sunshine of a life well spent !
Then, if a thought should glad thy
breast

Of those who loved thee first and best,
My name, perchance, may haunt the
spot

Not quite unprized—nor all forgot

TO—

MINE is a wayward lay,
And, if its echoing rhymes I try to
string,
Proveth a truant thing,
Whenso some names I love, send it
away !

For then, eyes swimming o'er
And clasped hands, and smiles in
fondness meant,
Are much more eloquent—
So it had fain begone, and speak no
more !

Yet shall it come again,
Ah friend below'd ! if so thy wishes be,
And, with mild melody,
I will, upon thine ear, cadence my
strain—

Cadence my simple line,
Unfashion'd by the cunning hand
of Art,

But coming from my heart,
To tell the message of its love to
thine !

D

As ocean shells when taken
From ocean's bed, will faithfully re-
peat
Her ancient music sweet—
Ev'n so these words, true to my heart,
shall waken !

Oh ! while our bark is seen,
Our little bark of kindly, social love,
Down life's clear stream to move
Toward the summer shores, where all
is green—

So long thy name shall bring
Echoes of joy unto the grateful gales,
And thousand tender tales
To freshen the fond hearts that round
thee cling !

Hast thou not looked upon
The flowerets of the field in lowly
dress ?

Blame not my simpleness—
Think only of my love !—my song is
gone

STANZAS

OCCASIONED BY A PASSAGE IN MR
EMERSON'S JOURNAL, WHICH
STATES THAT, ON THE MENTION OF
LORD BYRON'S NAME, CAPTAIN
DEMETRIUS, AN OLD ROUMELIOT,
BURST INTO TEARS

Name not his name, or look afar—
For when my spirit hears
That name, its strength is turned to
woe—

My voice is turned to tears

Name me the host and battle-storm,
Mine own good sword shall stem,
Name me the foeman and the block,
I have a smile for *them* !

But name *him* not, or cease to mark
This brow where passions sweep—
Behold, a warrior is a man,
And as a man may weep !

I could not scorn my Country's foes,
Did not these tears descend—
I could not love my Country's fame,
And not my Country's Friend

Deem not his memory e'er can be
Upon our spirits dim—

Name us the generous and the free,
And we must think of *him* !

For his voice resounded through our
land

Like the voice of liberty,
As when the war-trump of the wind
Upstirs our dark blue sea

His arm was in the foremost rank,
Where embattled thousands roll—
His name was in the love of Greece,
And his spell was on her soul !

But the arm that wielded her good
sword,
The brow that wore the wreath,
The lips that breathed the deathless
thought—

They went asleep in death

Ye left his HEART, when ye took
away

The dust in funeral state,
And we dumbly placed in a little urn
That home of all things great

The banner streamed—the war-shout
rose—

Our heroes played their part,
But not a pulse would throb or burn—
Oh ! could it be *his* heart !

I will not think—'tis worse than vain
Upon such thoughts to keep,
Then, Briton, name me not his
name—

I cannot choose but weep !

THE PAST

THERE is a silence upon the Ocean,
Albert it swells with a feverish
motion,

Like to the battle-camp's fearful calm,
While the banners are spread, and the
warriors arm

The winds beat not their drum to the
waves,
But sullenly moan in the distant
caves,

Talking over, before they rise,
Some of their dark conspiracies

And so it is in this life of ours,
A calm may be on the present hours,
But the calmest hour of festive glee
May turn the mother of woe to thee

I will betake me to the Past,
And she shall make my love at last

I will find my home in her tarrying-
place—
I will gaze all day on her deathly
face !

Her form, though awful, is fair to
view ,
The clasp of her hand, though cold,
is true ,
Her shadowy brow hath no change-
fulness
And her numbered smiles can grow no
less !

Her voice is like a pleasant song,
Which we have not heard for very
long
And which a joy on our souls will cast,
Though we know not where we heard
it last

She shall walk with me, away, away
Where'er the mighty have left their
clay ,
She shall speak to me in places lone,
With a low and holy tone

Ay ! when I have lit my lamp at night,
She will be present with my spite ,
And I will say, whate'er it be,
Every word she telleth me !

THE PRAYER

METHOUGHT that I did stand upon
a tomb—
And all was silent as the dust be-
neath,
While feverish thoughts upon my
soul would come,
Losing my words in tears I
thought of death ,
And prayed that when my lips gave
out the breath,
The friends I loved like life might
stay behind ,
So, for a little while, my name
might eath
Be something dear,—spoken with
voices kind,
Heard with remembering looks from
eyes which tears would blind !

I prayed that I might sink into my
rest,
(O foolish, selfish prayer !) before
them all ,

So I might look my last on those
loved best—
So never would my voice repining
call,
And never would my tears impas-
sioned fall
On one familiar face turning to
clay !
So would my tune of life be musical,
Albert abrupt—like airs the Span-
iards play,
Which in the sweetest part break off,
and die away

Methought I looked around ! the
scene was rife
With little vales, green banks, and
waters heaving ,
And every living thing did joy in
life,
And every thing of beauty did seem
living—
Oh then life's pulse was at my
heart reviving ,
And then I knew that it was good
to bear
Dispensed woe, that by the spirit's
grieving
It might be weaned from a world so
fair !—
Thus with submissive words mine
heart did close its prayer

ON A PICTURE OF RIEGO'S WIDOW

PLACED IN THE EXHIBITION

DAUGHTER of Spain ! a passer by
May mark the cheek serenely
pale—
The dark eyes which dream silently,
And the calm lip which gives no
wail !
Calm ! it bears not a deeper trace
Of feelings it disdained to show ,
We look upon the Widow's face,
And only read the Patriot's woe !
No word, no look, no sigh of thine,
Would make *his* glory seem more
dim ,
Thou would'st not give to vulgar eyne
The sacred tear which fell for HIM
Thou would'st not hold to the world's
view
Thy ruined joys, thy broken heart—

The jeering world—it only knew
Of all thine anguish—that thou
wert !

While o'er *his* grave thy steps would
go
With a firm tread,—stilling thy
love—

As if the dust would blush below
To feel one faltering foot above

For Spain, *he* dared the noble strife—
For Spain, he gave his latest
breath,
And he who lived the Patriot's life,
Was dragged to die the traitor's
death !

And the shout of thousands swept
around,
As he stood the traitor's block be-
side,
But his dying lips gave a free sound—
Let the foe weep !—thy brow had
pride !

Yet haply in the midnight air,
When none might part thy God
and thee,
The lengthened sob, the passionate
prayer,
Have spoken thy soul's agony !

But silent else, thou past away—
The plaint unbreath'd, the anguish
hid—
More voiceless than the echoing clay
Which idly knocked thy coffin's
lid

Peace be to thee ! while Britons seek
This place, if British souls they bear,
'Twill start the crimson in the cheek
To see Riego's widow *THERE* !

SONG

WEEP, as if you thought of laughter !
Smile, as tears were coming after !
Marry your pleasures to your woes,
And think life's green well worth its
rose !

No sorrow will your heart betide,
Without a comfort by its side,
The sun may sleep in his sea-bed,
But you have starlight overhead

Trust not to Joy ! the rose of June,
When opened wide, will wither soon,

Italian days without twilight,
Will turn them suddenly to night

Joy most changeful of all things,
Flits away on rainbow wings,
And when they look the gayest know,
It is that they are spread to go !

THE DREAM

A FRAGMENT

I HAD a dream !—my spirit was
unbound
From the dark iron of its dungeon,
clay,
And rode the steeds of Time,—my
thoughts had sound,
And spoke without a word,—I went
away
Among the buried ages, and did lay
The pulses of my heart beneath the
touch
Of the rude minstrel Time, that he
should play
Thereon a melody which might
seem such
As musing spirits love—mournful, but
not too much !

I had a dream—and there mine eyes
did see
The shadows of past deeds like
present things—
The sepulchres of Greece and
Hesperia,
Ægyptus and old lands, gave up
their kings,
Their prophets, saints, and min-
strels, whose lute-strings
Keep a long echo—yea, the dead,
white bones
Did stand up by the house whereto
Death clings,
And dressed themselves in life,
speaking of thrones,
And fame, and power, and beauty, in
familiar tones !

I went back further still, for I be-
held
What time the earth was one fair
Paradise—
And over such bright meads the
waters welled,
I wot the rainbow was content to
rise

Upon the earth, when absent from
the skies !
And there were tall trees that I
never knew,
Whereon sate nameless birds in
merry guise
Folding their radiant wings, as the
flowers do,
When summer nights send sleep
down with the dew
* * *

Anon there came a change—a
terrible motion
That made all living things grow
pale and shake !
The dark Heavens bowed them-
selves unto the ocean,
Like a strong man in strife—Ocean
did take
His flight across the mountains,
and the lake
Was lashed into a sea where the
winds ride—
Earth was no more, for in her
merrymake
She had forgot ner God—Sin
claimed his bride,
And with his vampire breath sucked
out her life's fair tide !

Life went back to her nostrils, and
she raised
Her spirit from the waters once
again—
The lovely sights, on which I erst
had gazed
Were *not*—though she was beautiful
as when
The Grecian called her " Beauty "
—sinful men
Walked i' the track of the waters,
and felt bold—
Yea, they looked up to Heaven in
calm disdain,
As if no eye had seen its vault un-
fold
Darkness, and fear, and death !—as
if a tale were told !

And ages fled away within my
dream,
And still Sin made the heart his
dwelling-place,
Eclipsing Heaven from men, but it
would seem
That two or three dared commune
face to face,

And speak of the soul's life, of hope,
and grace—
Anon there rose such sounds as
angels breathe—
For a God came to die, bringing
down peace—
" Pan was *not* " and the darkness
that did wreath
The earth, passed from the soul—Life
came by death !
* * *

RIGA'S LAST SONG

I HAVE looked my last on my native
land,
And over these strings I throw my
hand,
To say in the death-hour's min-
strelsy,
Hellas, my country ! farewell to thee !
I have looked my last on my native
shore,
I shall tread my country's plains no
more,
But my last thought is of her fame,
But my last breath speaketh her name !
And though these lips shall soon be
still,
They may now obey the spirit's will,
Though the dust be fettered, the
spirit is free—
Hellas, my country ! farewell to thee !
I go to death—but I leave behind
The stirrings of Freedom's mighty
mind,
Her voices shall arise from plain to sky,
Her steps shall tread where my ashes
lie !
I looked on the mountains of proud
Soul,
And the mountains they seemed to
look on me,
I spoke my thought on Marathon's
plain,
And Marathon seemed to speak
again !

And as I journeyed on my way,
I saw an infant group at play,
One shouted aloud in his childish glee,
And showed me the heights of Ther-
mopylæ !

I gazed on peasants hurrying by—
The dark Greek pride crouched in
their eye,

So I swear in my death-hour's
minstrelsy
Hellas, my country! thou *shalt* be free!
No more!—I dash my lyre on the
ground—

I tear its strings from their home of
sound—

For the music of slaves shall never keep
Where the hand of a freeman was
wont to sweep!

And I bend my brows above the block,
Silently waiting the swift death shock
For these lips shall speak what be-
comes the free—

Or—Hellas, my country! farewell to
thee!

* *

He bowed his head with a Patriot's
pride,

And his dead trunk fell the mute lyre
beside!

The soul of each had passed away—
Soundless the strings—breathless the
clay!

THE VISION OF FAME

DID ye ever sit on summer noon,
Half musing and half asleep,
When ye smile in such a dreamy way,
Ye know not if ye weep—

When the little flowers are thick be-
neath

And the welkin blue above,
When there is not a sound but the
cattle's low,

And the voice of the woodland dove?

A while ago and I dreamed thus—
I mused on ancient story,—

For the heart like a minstrel of old
doth seem,

It delighteth to sing of glory

What time I saw before me stand

A bright and lofty One,

A golden lute was in her hand,

And her brow drooped thereon

But the brow that drooped was
raised soon,

Showing its royal sheen—

It was, I guessed, no human brow,

Though pleasant to human e'en

And this brow of peerless majesty

With its whiteness did enshroud

Two eyes that, darkly mystical,

'Gan look up at a cloud

Like to the hair of Berenice,
Fetch'd from its house of light,
Was the hair which wreathed her
shadowless form—
And Fame the ladye hight!

But as she wended on to me,
My heart's deep fear was chidden,
For she called up the spite of Melody,
Which in her lute lay hidden

When ye speak to well-beloved ones,
Your voice is tender and low
The wires methought did love her
touch—

For they did answer so

And her lips in such a quiet way
Gave the chant soft and long,—
You might have thought she only
breathed,

And that her breath was song —

"When Death shrouds thy memory,
Love is no shrine—

The dear eyes that weep for thee
Soon sleep like thine!

The wail murmured over thee
Fainteth away,
And the heart which kept love for
thee
Turns into clay!

"But would'st thou remembered be,
Make me thy vow,

This verse that flows gushingly,
Telleth thee how—

Linking thy hand in mine,
Listen to me,

So not a thought of thine
Dieth with thee—

"Rife thy pulsing heart
Of the gift, love made,
Bid thine eye's light depart;
Let thy cheek fade!

Give me the slumber deep,
Which nought seems
Give me the creep
Into thy dreams!

"Give me thy youthful years,
Merriest that fly—

So the words, spoke in tears,
Liveth for aye!

So thy sepulchral stone,
Nations may raise—

What time thy soul hath known
The worth of praise!"

She did not sing this chant to me,
 Though I was sitting by,
 But I listened to it with chainèd
 breath,
 That had no power to sigh
 And ever as the chant went on,
 Its measure changed to wail,
 And ever as the lips sang on,
 Her face did grow more pale
 Paler and paler—till anon
 A fear came o'er my soul,
 For the flesh curled up from her bones,
 Like to a blasted scroll !

Ay ! silently it dropped away,
 Before my wondering sight—
 There was only a bleached skeleton,
 Where erst was ladye bright !

But still the vacant sockets gleamed
 With supernatural fires—
 But still the bony hands did ring
 Against the shuddering wires !

Alas alas ! I wended home,
 With a sorrow and a shame—
 Is Fame the rest of our poor hearts ?
 Woe's me ! for THIS is FAME !

PROMETHEUS BOUND

TRANSLATED FROM THE GREEK OF ÆSCHYLUS

1833

PERSONS OF THE DRAMA

PROMETHEUS HEPHÆSTUS
 OCEANUS Io, daughter of Inachus
 HERMES STRENGTH and FORCE

Chorus of Ocean Nymphs

SCENE—STRENGTH and FORCE, HEPHÆSTUS, and PROMETHEUS, at the Rocks

Strength We reach the utmost
 limit of the earth,
 The Scythian track, the desert with-
 out man—
 And now, Hephæstus, thou must
 needs fulfil
 The mandate of our father, and, with
 links
 Indissoluble of adamantine chains,
 Fasten against this beetling precipice,
 Thus guilty god ! Because he filched
 away
 Thine own bright flower, the glory of
 plastic fire,
 And gifted mortals with it,—such a sin,
 It doth behove he expiate to the gods
 Learning to accept the empery of
 Zeus,
 And leave off his old trick of loving
 man
Hephæstus O Strength and Force,
 —for you, our Zeus's will
 Presents a deed for doing,—no more !
 —but I,
 I lack your daring, up this storm-
 rent chasm,
 To fix with violent hands a kindred god
 Howbeit necessity compels me so

That I must dare it—and our Zeus
 commands
 With a most inevitable word, Ho,
 thou !
 High thoughted son of Themis who is
 sage !
 Thee loth, I loth must rivet fast in
 chains
 Against this rocky height unclomb
 by man,
 Where never human voice nor face
 shall find
 Out thee who lov'st them, and thy
 beauty's flower,
 Scorched in the sun's clear heat, shall
 fade away
 Night shall come up with garniture
 of stars
 To comfort thee with shadow, and
 the sun
 Disperse, with retriçt beams, the
 morning-frosts,
 But through all changes, sense of
 present woe
 Shall vex thee sore, because with
 none of them
 There comes a hand to free Such
 fruit is plucked
 From love of man !—and in that thou,
 a god,
 Didst brave the wrath of gods and
 give away
 Unduerespect to mortals, for that crime
 Thou art adjudged to guard this joy-
 less rock,

Erect, unslumbering, bending not the knee,

And many a cry and unavailing moan
To utter on the air! For Zeus is stern,

And new-made kings are cruel
Strength Be it so
Why loiter in vain pity? Why not hate
A god the gods hate?—one, too, who betrayed

Thy glory unto men?

Hephaestus An awful thing
Is kinship joined to friendship

Strength Grant it be
Is disobedience to the Father's word
A possible thing? Dost quail not
more for that?

Hephaestus Thou, at least, art a stern one! ever bold!

Strength Why, if I wept, it were no remedy!

And do not thou spend labour on the air
To bootless uses

Hephaestus Cursed handicraft!
I curse and hate thee, O my craft!

Strength Why hate
Thy craft, most plainly innocent of all
These pending ills?

Hephaestus I would some other hand
Were here to work it!

Strength All work hath its pain,
Except to rule the gods There is none free

Except King Zeus

Hephaestus I know it very well
I argue not against it

Strength Why not, then,
Make haste, and lock the fetters over him,

Lest Zeus behold thee lagging

Hephaestus Here be chains—
Zeus may behold these

Strength Seize him,—strike a man!
Strike with the hammer on each side
his hands—

Rivet him to the rock

Hephaestus The work is done,
And thoroughly done

Strength Still faster grapple him,—
Wedge him in deeper,—leave no
inch to stir!

He's terrible for finding a way out
From the irremediable

Hephaestus Here's an arm, at least,
Grappled past freeing

Strength Now, then, buckle me

The other securely Let this wise one learn

He's duller than our Zeus

Hephaestus Oh, none but he
Accuse me justly!

Strength Now, straight through
the chest,

Take him and bite him with the
clenching tooth

Of the adamantine wedge, and rivet
him

Hephaestus Alas, Prometheus!
what thou sufferest here,

I sorrow over

Strength Dost thou flinch again,
And breathe groans for the enemies
of Zeus?

Beware, lest thine own pity find thee
out

Hephaestus Thou dost behold a
spectacle that turns

The sight o' the eyes to pity

Strength I behold
A sinner suffer his sin's penalty

But lash the thongs about his sides.
Hephaestus So much

I must do Urgenofarther than I must.
Strength Ay, but I will urge!—

and, with shout on shout,
Will hound thee at this quarry! Get
thee down

And ring amain the iron round his
legs!

Hephaestus That work was not
long doing

Strength Heavily now
Let fall the strokes upon the perform-
ant gyves!

For He who rates the work has a
heavy hand

Hephaestus Thy speech is savage
as thy shape

Strength Be thou
Gentle and tender! but revile not me
For the firm will and the untrucking
hate

Hephaestus Let us go! He is
netted round with chains

Strength Here now, taunt on!
and, having spoiled the gods
Of honours, crown withal thy mortal
men

Who live a whole day out! Why,
how could they

Draw off from thee one single of thy
griefs?

Methinks the Dæmons gave thee a
 wrong name,
Prometheus, which means Providence,—because
 Thou dost thyself need providence
 to see,
 Thy roll and run from the top of doom
Prometheus (alone) Oholy Æther,
 and swift-winged Winds,
 And River-wells, and laughter in-
 numerous
 Of yon Sea-waves! Earth, mother
 of us all,
 And all-viewing cyclic Sun, I cry on
 you!—
 Behold me, a god, what I endure
 from gods!
 Behold, with throe on throe,
 How, wasted by this woe,
 I wrestle down the myriad years of
 Time!
 Behold, how, fast around me,
 The new King of the happy ones sub-
 lime
 Has flung the chain he forged, has
 shamed and bound me!
 Woe, woe! to-day's woe and the
 coming morrow's,
 I cover with one groan! And where
 is found me
 A limit to these sorrows?
 And yet what word do I say? I
 have foreknown
 Clearly all things that should be—
 nothing done,
 Comes sudden to my soul—and I
 must bear
 What is ordained with patience, be-
 ing aware
 Necessity doth front the universe
 With an invincible gesture Yet
 this curse
 Which strikes me now, I find it hard
 to brave
 In silence or in speech Because I gave
 Honour to mortals, I have yoked my
 soul
 To this compelling fate! Because I
 stole
 The secret fount of fire, whose bubbles
 went
 Over the ferule's brim, and manward
 sent
 Art's mighty means and perfect
 rudiment,
 That sin I explete in this agony,

Hung here in fetters, 'neath the
 blanching sky!

Ah, ah me! what a sound,
 What a fragrance sweeps up from a
 pinion unseen

Of a god, or a mortal, or nature
 between,—

Sweeping up to this rock where the
 earth has her bound,

To have sight of my pangs,—or some
 guerdon obtain—

Lo! a god in the anguish, a god in
 the chain!

The god, Zeus hateth sore,
 And his gods hate again,

As many as trod on his glorified
 floor,—

Because I loved mortals too much
 evermore!

Alas me! what a murmur and mo-
 tion I hear,

As of birds flying near!
 And the air undersings

The light stroke of their wings—
 And all life that approaches, I wait
 for in fear

Chorus of Sea Nymphs, 1st Strophe

Fear nothing! our troop
 Floats lovingly up,

With a quick-oaring stroke
 Of wings steered to the rock,

Having softened the soul of our
 father below!

For the gales of swift-bearing have
 sent me a sound,—

And the clank of the iron, the
 mallet blow,

Smote down the profound
 Of my caverns of old,

And struck the red light in a blush
 from my brow,—

Till I sprang up unsandalled, in
 haste to behold,

And rushed forth on my chariot of
 wings manifold

Prometheus Alas me!—alas me!
 Ye offspring of Tethys, who bore at
 her breast

Many children, and eke of Oceanus,
 —he,

Coiling still around earth with per-
 petual unrest!

Behold me and see
 How transfixed with the fang

Of a fetter, I hang

On the high-jutting rocks of this
fissure, and keep
An uncoveted watch o'er the world
and the deep

Chorus, 1st Antistrophe

I behold thee, Prometheus—yet now,
yet now,
A terrible cloud, whose rain is tears,
Sweeps over mine eyes that witness
how

Thy body appears
Hung awaste on the rocks by infran-
gible chains !
For new is the hand and the rudder
that steers
The ship of Olympus through surge
and wind—
And of old things passed, no track is
behind

Prometheus Under earth, under
Hades,

Where the home of the shade is,
All into the deep, deep Tartarus,
I would he had hurled me adown !
I would he had plunged me, fastened
thus
In the knotted chain, with the sav-
age clang
All into the dark, where there should
be none,
Neither god nor another, to laugh
and see !

But now the winds sing through
and shake

The hurtling chains wherein I
hang,—

And I, in my naked sorrows,
make

Much mirth for my enemy

Chorus, 2nd Strophe

Nay ! who of the gods hath a heart
so stern,

As to use thy woe for a mock and
mirth ?

Who would not turn more mild to
learn

Thy sorrows ? who of the heaven
and earth

Save Zeus ? But he

Right wrathfully

Bears on his sceptral soul un-
bent,

And rules thereby the heavenly
seed,

Nor will he cease, till he content
His thirsty heart in a finished
deed,

Or till Another shall appear,
To win by fraud, to seize by fear
The hard to be captured govern-
ment

Prometheus Yet even of me he
shall have need,

That monarch of the blessed
seed,

Of me, of me, who now am
cursed

Beneath his fetters dire,—

To wring my secret out withal,
And learn by whom his sceptre
shall

Be filched from him—as was, at
first,

His heavenly fire !

But he never shall enchant me
With his honey-lipped per-
suasion,

Never, never shall he daunt me
With the oath and threat of
passion,

Into speaking as they want me,
Till he loose this savage chain,

And accept the expiation

Of my sorrow, by his pain

Chorus, 2nd Antistrophe

Thou art, sooth, a brave god,
And, for all thou hast borne

From the stroke of the rod,
Nought relaxest from scorn !

But thou speakest unto me
Too free and unworn—

And a terror strikes through me,
And festers my soul,

And I fear, in the roll

Of the storm, for thy fate

In the ship far from shore—

Since the son of Saturnius is hard in
his hate,

And unmoved in his heart ever-
more

Prometheus I know that Zeus is
stern !

I know he metes his justice by his
will !

And yet, his soul shall learn

More softness when once broken by
this ill,

And, curbing his unconquerable
vaunt,
He shall rush on in fear, to meet with
me

Who rush to meet with him in agony,
To issues of harmonious covenant

Chorus Remove the veil from all
things and relate

The story to us!—of what crime
accused,

Zeus smites thee with dishonourable
pangs

Speak! if to teach us do not grieve
thyself

Prometheus The utterance of
these things is torture to me,
But so, too, is their silence! each
way lies

Woe strong as fate!—

When gods began with wrath,
And war rose up between their starry
brows,—

Some choosing to cast Chronos from
his throne

That Zeus might king it there, and
some in haste

With opposite oaths that they would
have no Zeus

To rule the gods for ever,—I, who
brought

The counsel I thought meetest, could
not move

The Titans, children of the Heaven
and Earth,—

What time, disdaining in their rugged
souls

My sublemachinations, they assumed
It was an easy thing for force to take

The mastery of fate My mother,

To lead my willing mother upwardly,
And set my Themis face to face with
Zeus,

As willing to receive her! Tartarus,
With its abysmal cloister of the Dark,
Because I gave that counsel, covers up
The antique Chronos and his siding
hosts,

And, by that counsel helped, the king
of gods

Hath recompensed me by these bitter
pangs!

For kingship wears a cancer at the
heart—

Distrust in friendship Do ye also
ask

What crime it is for which he tortures
me—

It shall be clear before you When
at first

He filled his father's throne, he in-
stantly

Made various gifts of glory to the gods,
And dealt the empire out Alone

of men,
Of miserable men, he took no count,

But yearned to sweep their track
off from the world,

And plant a newer race there! Not
a god

Resisted that desire except myself!
I dared it! I drew mortals back to

light,
From meditated ruin deep as hell!—

For which wrong, I am bent down in
these pangs,

Dreadful to suffer, mournful to be-
hold,—

And I, who pitied man, am thought
myself

I must be a sad sight

Chorus And didst thou sin
No more than so ?

Prometheus I did restrain be-
sides
My mortals from premeditating
death

Chorus How didst thou medi-
cine the plague-fear of death ?

Prometheus I set blind Hopes to
inhabit in their house

Chorus By that gift, thou didst
help thy mortals well

Prometheus I gave them also,—
fire

Chorus And have they now,
Those creatures of a day, the red-
eyed fire ?

Prometheus They have ! and shall
learn by it, many arts

Chorus And, truly, for such sins
Zeus tortures thee,

And will remit no anguish ? Is there
set

No limit before thee to thine agony ?

Prometheus No other ! only what
seems good to HIM

Chorus And how will it seem
good ? what hope remains ?

Seest thou not that thou hast sinned ?
But that thou hast sinned

It glads me not to speak of, and
grieves thee—

Then let it pass from both ! and
seek thyself

Some outlet from despair

Prometheus It is in truth
An easy thing to stand aloof from

I bear to-day !—hear rather, drop-
ping down

To the plain, how other woes creep
on to me,

And learn the consummation of my
doom

Beseech you, nymphs, beseech you !
—grieve for me

Who am now grieving !—for Grief
walks the earth,

And sits down at the foot of each by
turns

Chorus We hear the deep clash
of thy words,

Prometheus, and obey !

And I spring with a rapid foot
away

From the rushing car and the holy
air

The track of birds—

And I drop to the rugged ground
and there

Await the tale of thy despair

Enter OCEANUS

Oceanus I reach the bourne of
my weary road

Where I may see and answer
thee,

Prometheus, in thine agony !
On the back of the quick-winged

bird I glode,

And I bridled him in

With the will of a god !

Behold thy sorrowaches in me,
Constrained by the force of

kin,—

<p>To look upon my woe ? How hast thou dared To leave the depths called after thee, the caves Self-hewn and self-roofed with spon- taneous rock, To visit earth, the mother of my chain ? Hast come indeed to view my doom and mourn That I should sorrow thus ? Gaze on, and see How I, the fast friend of your Zeus, —how I, The erector of the empire in his hand,— Am bent beneath that hand, in this despair ! <i>Oceanus</i> Prometheus, I behold,— and I would fain Exhort thee, though already subtle enough, To a better wisdom Titan, know thyself, And take new softness to thy manners since A new king rules the gods If words like these, Harsh words and trenchant, thou wilt fling abroad, Zeus haply, though he sit so far and high, May hear thee do it, and, so, this wrath of his, Which now affects thee fiercely, shall appear A mere child's sport at vengeance ! Wretched god, Rather dismiss the passion which thou hast, And seek a change from grief Per- haps I seem To address thee with old saws and outworn sense — Yet such a curse, Prometheus, surely waits On lips that speak too proudly !— thou, meantime, Art none the meeker, nor dost yield a jot To evil circumstance,—preparing still To swell the account of grief with other griefs Than what are borne ! Beseech thee, use me then</p>	<p>For counsel ! Do not spurn against the pricks,— Seeing that who reigns, reigns by cruelty, Instead of right And now, I go from hence, And will endeavour if a power of mine Can break thy fetters through For thee,—be calm, And smooth thy words from passion Knowest thou not Of perfect knowledge, thou who knowest too much, That where the tongue wags, ruin never lags ? <i>Prometheus</i> I gratulate thee, who hast shared and dared All things with me, except their penalty ! Enough so ! leave these thoughts ! It cannot be That thou shouldst move Him He may not be moved ! And <i>thou</i>, beware of sorrow on this road ! <i>Oceanus</i> Ay ! ever wiser for an- other's use Than thine ! the event, and not the prophecy, Attests it to me Yet where now I rush Thy wisdom hath no power to drag me back, Because I glory—glory, to go hence To win for thee deliverance from thy pangs, As a free gift from Zeus <i>Prometheus</i> Why there, again, I give thee gratulation and applause ! Thou lackest no good will But, as for deeds, Do nought ! 'twere all done vainly ! helping nought, Whatever thou wouldst do Rather take rest, And keep thyself from evil If I grieve, I do not therefore wish to multiply The griefs of others Verily, not so ! For still my brother's doom doth vex my soul,— My brother Atlas, standing in the west, Shouldering the column of the heaven and earth,</p>
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A difficult burden! I have also
 seen,
 And pitied as I saw, the earth-born
 one,
 The habitant of old Cilician caves,
 The great war-monster of the hundred
 heads,
 (All taken and bowed beneath the
 violent Hand),
 Typhon the fierce, who did resist the
 gods,
 And, hissing slaughter from his dread-
 ful jaws,
 Did flash ferocious glory from his
 eyes,
 As if to storm the throne of Zeus!
 Whereat,
 The sleepless arrow of Zeus flew
 straight at him,—
 The headlong bolt of thunder breath-
 ing flame,
 And struck him downward from his
 eminence
 Of exultation! Through the very
 soul
 It struck him, and his strength was
 withered up
 To ashes, thunder-blasted Now,
 he lies
 A helpless trunk supinely, at full
 length,
 Beside the strait of ocean, spurred
 into
 By roots of Ætna,—high upon whose
 tops
 Hephæstus sits and strikes the flash-
 ing ore!
 From thence the rivers of fire shall
 burst away
 Hereafter, and devour with savage
 jaws
 The equal plains of fruitful Sicily,—
 Such passion he shall boil back in
 hot darts
 Of an insatiate fury and sough of
 flame,—
 Fallen Typhon,—howsoever struck
 and charred
 By Zeus's bolted thunder! But for
 thee,
 Thou art not so unlearned as to need
 My teaching—let thy knowledge save
 thyself,
 I quaff the full cup of a present doom,
 And wait till Zeus hath quenched
 his will in wrath

Oceanus Prometheus, art thou
 ignorant of this,—

That words do medicine anger?

Prometheus If the word
 With seasonable softness touch the
 soul,

And, where the parts are ulcerous,
 sear them not

With any rudeness

Oceanus With a noble aim
 To dare as nobly—is there harm in
 that?

Dost thou discern it? Teach me

Prometheus I discern
 Vain aspiration,—unresolute work

Oceanus Then suffer me to bear
 the brunt of this!

Since it is profitable that one who is
 wise

Should seem not wise at all

Prometheus And such would seem
 My very crime

Oceanus In truth, thine argument
 Sends me back home

Prometheus Lest any lament for
 me

Should cast thee down to hate

Oceanus The hate of Him,
 Who sits a new king on the absolute
 throne?

Prometheus Beware of him,—
 lest thine heart grieve by him

Oceanus Thy doom, Prometheus,
 be my teacher!

Prometheus Go!
 Depart—beware!—and keep the
 mind thou hast

Oceanus Thy words drive after, as
 I rush before—

Lo! my four-footed Bird sweeps
 smooth and wide

The flats of air with balanced pinions
 glad

To bend his knee at home, in the
 ocean-stall

[Exit OCEANUS]

1st Strophe

I moan thy fate, I moan for thee,
 Prometheus! From my eyes too
 tender,

Drop after drop incessantly,

The tears of my heart's pity render
 My cheeks wet from their fountains
 free,—

Because that Zeus, the stern and cold,

Whose law is taken from his
breast,
Uplifts his sceptre manifest
Over the gods of old

1st Antistrophe

All the land is moaning
With a murmured plaint to-day !
All the mortal nations,
Having habitations
In the holy Asia,
Are a dirge intoning
For thine honour and thy brother's,
Once majestic beyond others
In the old belief,—
Now are groaning in the groaning
Of thy deep-voiced grief

2nd Strophe

Mourn the maids inhabitant
Of the Colchian land,
Who with white, calm bosoms, stand
In the battle's roar !
Mourn the Scythian tribes that haunt
The verge of earth, Mæotis' shore

2nd Antistrophe

And Arabia's battle crown,
And dwellers in the beething town
Mount Caucasus sublimely nears —
An iron squadron thundering down
With the sharp-prowed spears

But one other before, have I seen
to remain,

By invincible pain
Bound and vanquished,—one Titan !
—'twas Atlas, who bears
In a curse from the gods, by that
strength of his own
Which he evermore wears,
The weight of the heaven on his
shoulder alone,

While he sighs up the stars !
And the tides of ocean wail, bursting
their bars,—

Murmurs stir the profound,—
And black Hades roars up through
the chasm of the ground,—
And the fountains of pure-running
rivers moan low

In a pathos of woe

Prometheus Beseech you, think
not I am silent thus
Through pride or scorn ! I only
gnaw my heart

With meditation, seeing myself so
wronged !

For so—their honours to these new-
made gods,

What other gave, but I,—and dealt
them out

With distribution ? Ay—but here I
am dumb !

For here, I should repeat your know-
ledge to you,

If I spake aught List rather to
the deeds

I did for mortals !—how, being fools
before,

I made them wise and true in aim of
soul !—

And let me tell you—not as taunting
men,

But teaching you the intention of my
gifts,

How, first beholding, they beheld in
vain,

And hearing, heard not, but, like
shapes in dreams,

Mixed all things wildly down the
tedious time,

Nor knew to build a house against
the sun,

With wicketed sides, nor any wood-
craft knew,

But lived, like silly ants, beneath
the ground

In hollow caves unsunned There,
came to them

No steadfast sign of winter, nor of
spring

Flower-perfumed, nor of summer
full of fruit,—

But blindly and lawlessly they did
all things

Until I taught them how the stars do
rise

And set in mystery,—and devised for
them

Number, the inducer of philosophies,
The synthesis of Letters, and, beside,

The artificer of all things, Memory,
That sweet Muse-mother I was

first to yoke
The servile beasts in couples, carrying

An herd of man's burdens on
their backs !

I joined to chariots, steeds, that love
the bit

They champ at—the chief pomp of
golden ease !

And none but I, originated ships,
The seaman's chariots, wandering
on the brine
With linen wings! And I—oh,
miserable!—
Who did devise for mortals all these
arts,
Have no device left now to save
myself
From the woe I suffer!

Chorus Most unseemly woe
Thou sufferest, and dost stagger from
the sense,
Bewildered! Like a bad leech falling
sick
Thou art faint at soul, and canst not
find the drugs
Required to save thyself

Prometheus Harken the rest,
And marvel further—what more arts
and means

I did invent,—this, greatest!—if a
man

Fell sick, there was no cure, nor escu-
lent,

Nor chrism, nor liquid, but for lack
of drugs

Men pined and wasted, till I showed
to them

Those mixtures of emollient remedies
Whereby they might be rescued from
disease

I fixed the various rules of mantic art,
Discerned the vision from the com-
mon dream,—

Instructed them in vocal auguries
Hard to interpret, and defined as
plain

The wayside omens,—flights of crook-
clawed birds,—

Showed which are, by their nature,
fortunate,

And which not so, and what the
food of each,

And what the hates, affections, social
needs,

Of all to one another,—taught what
sign

Of visceral lightness, coloured to a
shade,

May charm the genial gods, and what
fair spots

Commend the lung and liver *Burn-*
ing so

The limbs encased in fat, and the long
chime,

I led my mortals on to an art abstruse,
And cleared their eyes to the image
in the fire,

Erst filmed in dark Enough said
now of this

For the other helps of man hid under-
ground,

The iron and the brass, silver and gold,
Can any dare affirm he found them
out

Before me? None, I know! Unless
he choose

To lie in his vaunt In one word
learn the whole,

That all arts came to mortals from
Prometheus

Chorus Give mortals now no in-
expedient help,

Neglecting thine own sorrow! I have
hope still

To see thee, breaking from the fetter
here,

Stand up as strong as Zeus

Prometheus This ends not thus,
The oracular Fate ordains I must
be bowed

By infinite woes and pangs, to escape
this chain

Necessity is stronger than mine art

Chorus Who holds the helm of
that Necessity?

Prometheus The threefold Fates
and the unforgetting Furies

Chorus Is Zeus less absolute
than these are?

Prometheus Yea,
And therefore cannot fly what is
ordained

Chorus What is ordained for
Zeus, except to be

A king for ever?

Prometheus 'Tis too early yet
For thee to learn it ask no more

Chorus Perhaps
Thy secret may be something holy?

Prometheus Turn

To another matter! this, it is not time
To speak abroad, but utterly to veil

In silence For by that same secret
kept,

I 'scape this chain's dishonour, and
its woe

Chorus, 1st Strophe

Never, oh never,
May Zeus, the all-giver,

Wrestle down from his throne,
 In that might of his own,
 To antagonise mine !
 Nor let me delay
 As I bend on my way
 Toward the gods of the shrine,
 Where the altar is full
 Of the blood of the bull,
 Near the tossing brine
 Of Ocean my father !
 May no sin be sped in the word
 that is said,
 But my vow, be it rather
 Consummated
 Nor evermore fail, nor evermore
 pine

1st Antistrophe

'Tis sweet to have
 Life lengthened out
 With hopes proved brave
 By the very doubt,
 Till the spirit enfold
 Those manifest joys which were
 foretold !
 But I thrill to behold
 Thee, victim doomed,
 By the countless cares
 And the drear despairs,
 For ever consumed —
 And all because thou, who art fearless
 now,
 Of Zeus above,
 Dost overflow for mankind below
 With a free-souled, reverent love
 Ah ! friend, behold and see !
 What's all the beauty of humanity ?
 Can it be fair ?
 What's all the strength ?—is it strong ?
 And what hope can they bear,
 These dying livers—living one day
 long ?
 Ah, seest thou not, my friend,
 How feeble and slow
 And like a dream doth go
 This poor blind manhood, drifted
 from its end ?
 And how no mortal wranglings
 can confuse
 The harmony of Zeus ?
 Prometheus, I have learnt these
 things,
 From the sorrow in thy face !
 Another song did drop its
 wings
 Upon my lips in other days

When round the bath and
 round the bed
 The hymeneal chant instead
 I sang for thee, and smiled —
 And thou didst lead, with gifts
 and vows,
 Hesione, my father's child,
 To be thy wedded spouse

Io enters

Io What land is this ? what
 people is here ?
 And who is he that writhes, I see,
 In the rock-hung chain ?
 Now, what is the crime that hath
 brought thee to pain ?
 And what is the land—make answer
 free—
 Which I wander through, in my
 wrong and fear ?—
 Ah ! ah ! ah me !
 The gad-fly stingeth to agony !
 O Earth, keep off that phantasm pale
 Of earth-born Argus !—ah !—I quail
 When my soul descries
 That herdsman with the myriad eyes
 Which seem, as he comes, one crafty
 eye !
 Graves hide him not, though he
 should die,—
 But he doggeth me in my misery
 From the roots of death, on high—on
 high—
 And along the sands of the siding
 deep,
 All famine-worn, he follows me,
 And his waxen reed doth undersound
 The waters round,
 And giveth a measure that giveth
 sleep
 Woe, woe, woe !
 Where shall my weary course be
 done ?—
 What wouldst thou with me, Saturn's
 son ?
 And in what have I sinned, that I
 should go
 Thus yoked to grief by thine hand for
 ever ?
 Ah ! ah ! dost vex me so,
 That I madden and shiver,
 Stung through with dread ?
 Flash the fire down, to burn
 me !
 Heave the earth up, to cover
 me !

Or plunge me in the deep, with the
salt waves over me,
That the sea-beasts may be fed!
O king, do not spurn me
In my prayer!

For this wandering, everlonger,
evermore,

Hath overworn me,—
And I know not on what shore
I may rest from my despair

Cnorus Hearest thou what the
ox-horned maiden saith?

Prometheus How could I choose
but harken what she saith,
The frenzied maiden?—Inachus's
child?

Who love-warms Zeus's heart, and
now is lashed
By Here's hate along the unending
ways?

Io Who taught thee to articulate
that name,—

My father's? Speak to his
child,

By grief and shame defiled!

Who art thou, victim, thou—who
dost acclaim

Mine anguish in true words, on the
wide air?

And callest too by name the curse
that came

From Here unaware,

To waste and pierce me with its
maddening goad

Ah—ah—I leap

With the pang of the hungry—I
bound on the road—

I am driven by my doom—

I am overcome

By the wrath of an enemy strong and
deep!

Are any of those who have tasted
pain

Alas!—wretched as I?

Now tell me plain, doth aught re-
main

For my soul to endure beneath the
sky?

Is there any help to be holpen by?
If knowledge be in thee, let it be
said—

Cry aloud—cry

To the wandering, woeful maid

Prometheus Whatever thou wouldst
learn, I will declare,—

No riddle upon my lips, but such
straight words

As friends should use to each other
when they talk

Thou seest Prometheus, who gave
mortals fire!

Io O common Help of all men,
known of all,

O miserable Prometheus,—for what
cause

Dost thou endure thus?

Prometheus I have done with wail
For my own griefs—but lately

Io Wilt thou not
Vouchsafe the boon to me?

Prometheus Say what thou wilt,
For I vouchsafe all

Io Speak, then, and reveal
Who shut thee in this chasm

Prometheus The will of Zeus,
The hand of his Hephæstus

Io And what crime,
Dost expiate so?

Prometheus Enough for thee I
have told,

In so much only

Io Nay—but show besides
The limit of my wandering, and the
time

Which yet is lacking to fulfil my
grief

Prometheus Why, not to know
were better than to know,

For such as thou

Io Beseech thee, blind me not
To that which I must suffer

Prometheus If I do,
The reason is not that I grudge a
boon

Io What reason, then, prevents
thy speaking out?

Prometheus No grudging! but a
fear to break thine heart

Io Less care for me, I pray thee!
Certainty,

I count for advantage

Prometheus Thou wilt have it so,
And, therefore, I must speak Now
hear—

Chorus Not yet!
Give half the guerdon my way
Let us learn

First, what the curse is that befel the
maid,—

Her own voice telling her own wast-
ing woes!—

The sequence of that anguish shall
 await
 The teaching of thy lips
Prometheus It doth behove
 That thou, maid Io, should vouch-
 safe to these
 The grace they pray,—the more, be-
 cause they are called
 Thy father's sisters ' since to open out
 And mourn out grief where it is
 possible
 To draw a tear from the audience, is a
 work
 That pays its own price well
Io I cannot choose
 But trust you, nymphs, and tell you
 all ye ask,
 In clear words—though I sob amid
 my speech
 In speaking of the storm—curse sent
 from Zeus,
 And of my beauty, from which
 height it took
 Its swoop on me, poor wretch '
 left thus deformed,
 And monstrous to your eyes For
 evermore
 Around my virgin-chamber, wander-
 ing went
 The nightly visions which entreated
 me
 With syllabled smooth sweetness —
 " Blessed maid,
 Why lengthen out thy maiden hours,
 when fate
 Permits the noblest spousal in the
 world ?
 When Zeus burns with the arrow of
 thy love,
 And fain would touch thy beauty ?—
 Maiden, thou
 Despise not Zeus ' depart to Lerne's
 mead,
 That's green around thy father's
 flocks and stalls,
 Until the passion of the heavenly Eve
 Be quenched in sight " Such dreams
 did all night long
 Constrain me—me, unhappy '—till I
 dared
 To tell my father how they trod the
 dark
 With visionary steps, whereat he sent
 His frequent heralds to the Pythian
 fane,
 And also to Dodona, and inquired

How best, by act or speech, to please
 the gods
 The same returning, brought back
 oracles
 Of doubtful sense, indefinite response,
 Dark to interpret Then, at last
 there came
 To Inachus an answer that was
 clear,—
 Thrown straight as any bolt, and
 spoken out—
 Thus—" He should drive me from
 my home and land,
 And bid me wander to the extreme
 verge
 Of all the earth—or, if he willed it not,
 Should have a thunder with a fiery
 eye,
 Leap straight from Zeus to burn up
 all his race,
 To the last root of it " By which
 Loxian word,
 Subdued, he drove me forth, and shut
 me out,
 He loth, me loth,—but Zeus's violent
 bit
 Compelled him to the deed !—When
 instantly
 My body and soul were changed and
 distraught,
 And, horned as ye see, and spurred
 along
 By the fanged insect, with a maniac
 leap
 I rushed on to Cenchrea's limpid
 stream,
 And Lerne's fountain-water There,
 the earth-born,
 The herdsman Argus, most immitig-
 able
 Of wrath, did find me out, and track
 me out
 With countless eyes, set staring at my
 steps !—
 And though an unexpected sudden
 doom
 Drew him from life—I—curse-
 tormented still,
 Am driven from land to land before
 the scourge
 The gods hold o'er me So, thou
 hast heard the past,
 And if a bitter future thou canst
 tell,
 Speak on ! I charge thee, do not
 flatter me

Through pity, with false words ! for,
in my mind,
Deceiving works more shame than
torturing doth

Chorus

Ah ! silence here !
Nevermore, nevermore,
Would I languish for
The stranger's word
To thrill in mine ear !—
Nevermore for the wrong and the
woe and the fear
So hard to behold,
And so hard to bear,
Piercing my soul with a double-
edged sword
Of a sliding cold !
Ah Fate !—ah me !—
I shudder to see
This wandering maid in her agony

Prometheus Grief is too quick in
thee, and fear too full !
Be patient till thou hast learned the
rest !

Chorus Speak—teach !—
To those who are sad already, it
seems sweet,
By clear foreknowledge to make
perfect, pain

Prometheus The boon ye asked
me first was lightly won,—
For first ye asked the story of this
maid's grief
As her own lips might tell it—Now
remains
To list what other sorrows she so
young
Must bear from Here !—Inachus's
child,
O thou !—drop down thy soul, my
weighty words
And measure out the landmarks
which are set
To end thy wandering ! Toward the
orient sun
First turn thy face from mine, and
journey on
Along the desert flats, till thou shalt
come
Where Scythia's shepherd peoples
dwell aloft,
Perched in wheeled waggons under
woven roofs,

And twang the rapid arrow past the
bow—
Approach them not, but siding in
thy course,
The rugged shore-rocks resonant to
the sea,
Depart that country On the left
hand dwell
The iron-workers, called the Chalybes,
Of whom beware ! for certes they are
uncouth,
And no ^{so} bland to strangers
Reaching so
The stream Hybristes (well the *scorner*
called),
Attempt no passage,—it is hard to
pass,—
Or ere thou come to Caucasus itself,
That highest ^{of} mountains,—where
the river leaps
The precipice in his strength !—thou
must toil up
Those mountain-tops that neighbour
with the stars,
And tread the south way, and draw
near, at last,
The Amazonian host that hateth
man,
Inhabitants of Themiscyra, close
Upon Thermodon, where the sea's
rough jaw
Doth gnash at Salmydessa and pro-
vide
A cruel host to seamen, and to ships
A stepdame ! They with unreluc-
tant hand
Shall lead thee on and on, till thou
arrive
Just where the ocean-gates show
narrowest
On the Cimmerian isthmus Leaving
which,
Behoves thee swim with fortitude
of soul
The strait Mæotis Ay ! and ever-
more
That traverse shall be famous on
men's lips,
That strait called Bosphorus, the
horned one's road,
So named because of thee !—who so
wilt pass
From Europe's plain to Asia's conti-
nent
How think ye, nymphs ? the king of
gods appears

Impartial in ferocious deeds ? Be-
hold !

The god desirous of this mortal's love
Hath cursed her with these wander-
ings Ah, fair child,

Thou hast met a bitter groom for
bridal troth !

For all thou yet hast heard, can only
prove

The incompleted prelude of thy doom
Io Ah, ah !

Prometheus Is't thy turn, now,
to shriek and moan ?

How wilt thou, when thou hast hark-
ened what remains ?

Chorus Besides the grief thou
hast told, can aught remain ?

Prometheus A sea—of fore-
doomed evil worked to storm

Io What boots my life, then ?
why not cast myself

Down headlong from this miserable
rock,

That, dashed against the flats, I may
redeem

My soul from sorrow ? Better once
to die,

Than day by day to suffer
Prometheus Verily,

It would be hard for thee to bear my
woe,

For whom it is appointed not to die
Death frees from woe but I before

me see
In all my far prevision, not a bound

To all I suffer, ere that Zeus shall
fall

From being a king
Io And can it ever be

That Zeus shall fall from empire ?
Prometheus Thou methinks,

Wouldst take some joy to see it
Io Could I choose ?

I, who endure such pangs, now, by
that God !

Prometheus Learn from me,
therefore, that the event shall be

Io By whom shall his imperial
sceptred hand

Be emptied so ?
Prometheus Himself shall spoil

himself,
Through his idiotic counsels
Io How ? declare,

Unless the word bring evil
Prometheus He shall wed—

And in the marriage-bond be joined
to grief

Io A heavenly bride—or human ?
Speak it out,

If it be utterable
Prometheus Why should I say

which ?
It ought not to be uttered, verily

Io Then
It is his wife shall tear him from his

throne ?
Prometheus It is his wife shall

bear a son to him,
More mighty than the father

Io From this doom
Hath he no refuge ?

Prometheus None—or ere that I
Loosed from these fetters—

Io Yea—but who shall loose,
While Zeus is adverse ?

Prometheus One who is born of
thee,—

It is ordained so
Io What is this thou sayest ?

A son of mine shall liberate thee from
woe ?

Prometheus After ten generations,
count three more,

And find him in the third
Io The oracle

Remains obscure
Prometheus And search it not, to

learn
Thine own griefs from it

Io Point me not to a good,
To leave me straight bereaved

Prometheus I am prepared
To grant thee one of two things

Io But which two ?
Set them before me—grant me power

to choose
Prometheus I grant it—choose

now—shall I name aloud
What griefs remain to wound thee, or

what hand
Shall save me out of mine ?

Chorus Vouchsafe, O god,
The one grace of the twain to her

who prays,
The next to me—and turn back

neither prayer
Dishonoured by denial To herself

Recount the future wandering of
her feet—

Then point me to the looser of thy
chain—

Because I yearn to know him
Prometheus Since ye will,
 Of absolute will, this knowledge, I
 will set
 No contrary against it, nor keep
 back
 A word of all ye ask for Io, first
 To thee I must relate thy wandering
 course
 Far winding As I tell it, write it
 down
 In thy soul's book of memories
 When thou hast past
 The reflux bound that parts two
 continents,
 Track on the footsteps of the orient
 sun
 In his own fire—across the roar of
 seas,
 Fly till thou hast reached the Gor-
 gonian flats
 Beside Cisthene There the Phorocides,
 Three ancient maidens, live, with
 shape of swan,
 One tooth between them, and one
 common eye,
 On whom the sun doth never look at
 all
 With all his rays, nor evermore the
 moon,
 When she looks through the night!
 A near to whom
 Are the Gorgon sisters three, en-
 clothed with wings,
 With twisted snakes for ringlets,—
 man-aborred—
 There is no mortal gazes in their
 face,
 And gazing can breathe on I speak
 of such
 To guard thee from their horror Ay!
 and list
 Another tale of a dreadful sight!
 beware
 The Griffins, those unbarking dogs of
 Zeus,
 Those sharp-mouthed dogs!—and the
 Arimasian host
 Of one-eyed horsemen, habiting
 beside
 The river of Pluto that runs bright
 with gold
 Approach them not, beseech thee
 Presently
 Thou'lt come to a distant land, a
 dusky tribe

Of dwellers at the fountain of the Sun,
 Whence flows the river Æthiops!—
 wind along
 Its banks and turn off at the cataracts,
 Just as the Nile pours, from the
 Bybline hills
 His holy and sweet wave!—his
 course shall guide
 Thine own to that triangular Nile-
 ground,
 Where, Io, is ordained for thee and
 thine
 A lengthened exile Have I said, in this
 Aught darkly or incompletely?—
 now repeat
 The question make the knowledge
 fuller! Lo,
 I have more leisure than I covet here
Chorus If thou canst tell us
 aught that's left untold
 Or loosely told of her most dreary
 flight,
 Declare it straight! but if thou hast
 uttered all,
 Grant us that latter grace for which
 we prayed,
 Remembering how we prayed it
Prometheus She has heard,
 The uttermost of her wandering
 There it ends
 But that she may be certain not
 to have heard
 All vainly, I will speak what she en-
 dured
 Ere coming hither and invoke the past
 To prove my prescience true And
 so—to leave
 A multitude of words, and pass at
 once
 To the subject of thy course!—When
 thou hadst gone
 To those Molossian plains which
 sweep around
 Dodona shouldering Heaven, whereat
 the fane
 Of Zeus Thesprotian keepeth oracle,
 And, wonder past belief, where oaks
 do wave
 Articulate adjurations—ay, the same
 Saluted thee in no perplexed phrase,
 But clear with glory, noble wife of
 Zeus
 Who shouldst be (there, some sweet-
 ness took thy sense!)
 Thou didst rush further onward,—
 stung along

The ocean-shore,—toward Rhea's
mighty bay,—
And, tost back from it, wert tost to
it again
In stormy evolution!—and, know
well,
In coming time that hollow of the sea
Shall bear the name Ionian, and
present
A monument of Io's passage through,
Unto all mortals Be these words
the signs
Of my soul's power to look beyond
the veil
Of visible things The rest, to you
and her,
I will declare in common audience,
nymphs,
Returning thither where my speech
brake off
There is a town Canopus, built upon
The earth's far margin, at the mouth
of Nile,
And on the mound washed up by
it!—Io, there
Shall Zeus give back to thee thy
perfect mind,
And only by the pressure and the touch
Of a hand not terrible! and thou
to Zeus
Shalt bear a dusky son, who shall be
called
Thence, Epaphus, Touched! That son
shall pluck the fruit
Of all that land wide-watered by
the flow
Of Nile!—but after him, when count-
ing out
As far as the fifth full generation,—
then
Full fifty maidens, a fair woman-race,
Shall back to Argos turn reluctantly,
To fly the proffered nuptials of their
kin,
Their father's brother's These being
passion-struck,
Like falcons bearing hard on flying
doves
Shall follow, hunting at a quarry
of love!
They should not hunt—till envious
Heaven maintain
A curse betwixt that beauty and their
desire,
And Greece receive them, to be over-
come

In murderous woman-war, by fierce
red hands,
Kept savage by the right For
every wife
Shall slay a husband, dyeing deep
in blood
The sword of double edge!—(I wish
indeed
As fair a marriage-joy to all my foes!)
One bride alone shall fail to smite to
death
The head upon her pillow, touched
with love,
Made impotent of purpose, and
impelled
To choose the lesser evil,—shame on
her cheeks,
To blood-guilt on her hands Which
bride shall bear
A royal race in Argos Tedious
speech
Were needed to relate particulars
Of these things—'tis enough that,
from her seed,
Shall spring the strong He—famous
with the bow,
Whose arms shall break my fetters
off! Behold,
My mother Themis, that old Titaness,
Delivered to me such an oracle,—
But how and when, I should be
long to speak,
And thou, in hearing, wouldst not
garn at all

Io Eleleu, eleleu!
How the spasm and the pain,
And the fire on the brain,
Strike, burning me through!
How the sting of the curse, all
afame as it flew,
Pricks me onward again!
How my heart, in its terror, is
spurning my breast,—
And my eyes, like the wheels of a
chariot, roll round,—
I am whirled from my course, to
the east, to the west,
In the whirlwind of frenzy all
madly inwound—
And my mouth is unbridled for
anguish and hate,
And my words beat in vain, in wild
storms of unrest,
On the sea of my desolate
fate

Chorus—Strophe

Oh, wise was he oh, wise was he,
Who first within his spirit knew
And with his tongue declared it true,
That love comes best that comes unto
The equal of degree!

And that the poor and that the low
Should seek no love from those above
Whose souls are fluttered with the flow
Of airs about their golden height,
Or proud because they see arow
Ancestral crowns of light!

Antistrophe

Oh! never, never, may ye, Fates,
Behold me with your awful eyes
Lift mine too fondly up the skies
Where Zeus upon the purple waits!
Nor let me step too near—too
near—

To any suitor, bright from heaven!
Because I see—because I fear
This loveless maiden vexed and laden
By this fell curse of Heré,—driven
On wanderings dread and drear!

Epode

Nay, grant an equal troth instead
Of nuptial love, to bind me by!
It will not hurt—I shall not dread
To meet it in reply
And let not love from those above
Revert and fix me, as I said,
With that inevitable Eye!

I have no sword to fight that fight—
I have no strength to tread that path—
I know not if my nature hath
The power to bear,—I cannot see,
Whither, from Zeus's infinite,
I can have power to flee

Prometheus Yet Zeus howbeit
most absolute of will,
Shall turn to meekness,—such a
marriage-rite

He holds in preparation, which anon
Shall thrust him headlong from his
gerent seat

Adown the abysmal void! and so the
curse

His father Chronos muttered in his fall,
As he fell from his ancient throne
and cursed,

Shall be accomplished wholly No
escape

From all that run shall the filial Zeus
Find granted to him from any of his
gods,

Unless I teach him—I, the refuge,
know,

And I, the means—Now, therefore,
let him sit

And brave the imminent doom and
fix his faith

On his supernal noises, hurtling on
With restless hand, the bolt that
breathes out fire—

For these things shall not help him—
none of them—

Nor hinder his perdition when he falls
To shame, and lower than patience—
Such a foe

He doth himself prepare against him-
self,—

A wonder of unconquerable Hate,
An organiser of sublimer fire
Than glares in lightnings, and of
grander sound

Than aught the thunder rolls,—
out-thundering it,—

With power to shatter in Poseidon's
fist

The trident-spear, which, while it
plagues the sea

Doth shake the shores around it
Ay, and Zeus,

Precipitated thus, shall learn at length
The difference betwixt rule and
servitude

Chorus Thou makest threats for
Zeus of thy desires

Prometheus I tell you, all these
things shall be fulfilled,

Even so as I desire them

Chorus Must we then
Look out for one to come, to master
Zeus?

Prometheus These chains weigh
lighter than his sorrows shall

Chorus How art thou not afraid
to utter such words?

Prometheus What should I fear,
who cannot die?

Chorus But he
Can visit thee with drearer woe than
death's

Prometheus Why, let him do it!
—I am here, prepared

For all things and their pangs

Chorus The wise are they
Who reverence Adrasteia

Prometheus Reverence thou,
Adore thou, flatter thou, whomever
reigns,

Whenever reigning—but for me,
 your Zeus
 Is less than nothing! Let him act
 and reign
 His brief hour out according to his
 will—
 He will not, therefore, rule the gods
 too long!—
 But lo! I see that courier-god of Zeus,
 That new-made menial of the new-
 crowned king—
 He doubtless comes to announce us
 something new

HERMES enters

Hermes I speak to thee, the
 sophist,—the talker down
 Of scorn by scorn,—the sinner
 against gods,—
 The reverencer of men,—the thief
 of fire,—
 I speak to thee and adjure thee! Zeus
 requires
 Thy declaration of what marriage-rite
 Thus moves thy vaunt, and shall
 hereafter cause
 His fall from empire! Do not wrap
 thy speech
 In riddles, but speak clearly! Do
 not cast
 Ambiguous paths, Prometheus, for
 my feet—
 Since Zeus, thou may'st perceive,
 is scarcely won
 To mercy, by such means
Prometheus A speech well-mouthed
 In the utterance, and full-minded in
 the sense,
 As doth befit a servant of the gods!
 New gods, ye newly reign, and think
 forsooth
 Ye dwell in towers too high for any
 dart
 To take a wound there!—Have I not
 stood by
 While two kings fell from thence?
 and h! I not
 Behold the third, the same who rules
 you now,
 Fall, shamed, to sudden ruin?—Do
 I seem
 To tremble and quail before your
 modern gods?
 Far be it from me! For thyself, depart,
 Re-tread thy steps in haste! To all
 thou hast asked

I answer nothing
Hermes Such a wind of pride
 Impelled thee of yore full sail upon
 these rocks!

Prometheus I would not barter—
 learn thou soothly that!—

My suffering for thy service! I
 maintain

It is a nobler thing to serve these rocks
 Than live a faithful slave to father
 Zeus—

Thus upon scorners I retort their
 scorn

Hermes It seems that thou dost
 glory in thy despair

Prometheus I, glory? would my
 foes did glory so,

And I stood by to see them!—
 Naming whom,

Thou art not unremembered

Hermes Dost thou charge
 Me also with the blame of thy mis-
 chance?

Prometheus I tell thee, I loathe
 the universal gods

Who for the good I gave them
 rendered back

The ill of their injustice

Hermes Thou art mad—
 I hear thee raving, Titan, at the
 fever-height!

Prometheus If it be madness to
 abhor my foes,

May I be mad!

Hermes If thou wert prosperous,
 Thou wouldst be unendurable

Prometheus Alas!

Hermes Zeus knows not that word

Prometheus But maturing Time
 Teaches all things

Hermes Howbeit, thou hast not
 learnt

The wisdom yet, thou needest

Prometheus If I had,
 I should not talk thus with a slave
 like thee

Hermes No answer thou vouch-
 safest, I believe,

To the great Sire's requirement

Prometheus Verily

I owe him grateful service,—and
 should pay it

Hermes Why, thou dost mock
 me, Titan, as I stood

A child before thy face

Prometheus No child, forsooth,

But yet more foolish than a foolish child,
 If thou expect that I should answer aught
 Thy Zeus can ask No torture from his hand,
 Nor any machination in the world
 Shall force mine utterance, ere he loose, himself,
 These cankerous fetters from me !
 For the rest,
 Let him now hurl his blanching lightnings down,
 And with his white-winged snows and mutterings deep
 Of subterranean thunders, mix all things,
 Confound them in disorder ! None of this
 Shall bend my sturdy will, and make me speak
 The name of his dethroner who shall come
Hermes Can this avail thee ?
 Look to it !
Prometheus Long ago
 It was looked forward to,—pre-counselled of
Hermes Vain god, take righteous courage !—dare for once
 To apprehend and front thine agonies
 With a just prudence !
Prometheus Vainly dost thou chafe
 My soul with exhortation, as yonder sea
 Goes beating on the rock Oh ! think no more
 That I, fear-struck by Zeus to a woman's mind,
 Will supplicate him, loathed as he is,
 With feminine upliftings of my hands,
 To break these chains ! Far from me be the thought !
Hermes I have indeed, methinks,
 said much in vain,—
 For still thy heart, beneath my showers of prayers,
 Lies dry and hard !—nay, leaps like a young horse
 Who bites against the new bit in his teeth,
 And tugs and struggles against the new-tried rein !—
 Still fiercest in the feeblest thing of all,
 Which sophism is,—since absolute will disjoins

From perfect mind is worse than weak Behold,
 Unless my words persuade thee, what a blast
 And whirlwind of inevitable woe
 Must sweep persuasion through thee !
 For at first
 The Father will split up this jut of rock
 With the great thunder and the bolted flame,
 And hide thy body where a hinge of stone
 Shall catch it like an arm !—and when thou hast passed
 A long black time within, thou shalt come out
 To front the sun, while Zeus's winged hound,
 The strong carnivorous eagle, shall wheel down
 To meet thee,—self-called to a daily feast,—
 And set his fierce beak in thee, and tear off
 The long rags of thy flesh, and batten deep
 Upon thy dusky liver ! Do not look
 For any end moreover. to this curse
 Or ere some god appear, to accept thy pangs
 On his own head vicarious, and descend
 With unreluctant step the darks of hell,
 And gloomy abyss around Tartarus !—
 Then ponder this !—this threat is not a growth
 Of vain invention ! it is spoken and meant !
 King Zeus's mouth is impotent to lie,
 Consummating the utterance by the act—
 So, look to it, thou !—take heed !—and nevermore [will !
 Forget good counsel, to indulge self—
Chorus Our Hermes suits his reasons to the times—
 At least I think so !—since he bids thee drop
 Self will for prudent counsel Yield to him !
 When the wise err, their wisdom makes their shame
Prometheus Unto me the fore-knower, this mandate of power,
 He cries, to reveal it !
 What's strange in my fate, if I suffer from hate

At the hour that I feel it !
Let the locks of the lightning, all
bristling and whitening,

Flash, coiling me round !
While the æther goes surging 'neath
thunder and scourging
Of wild winds unbound !
Let the blast of the firmament whirl
from its place

The earth rooted below,—
And the brine of the ocean, in rapid
emotion,

Be it driven in the face
Of the stars up in heaven, as they
walk to and fro !
Let him hurl me anon, into Tartarus
—on—

To the blackest degree,
With Necessity's vortices strangling
me down !

But he cannot join death to a fate
meant for me !

Hermes Why, the words that he
speaks and the thoughts that
he thinks,

Are manacal !—Add,
If the Fate who hath bound him,
should loose not the links,

He were utterly mad

Then depart ye who groan with
him

Leaving to moan with him,—
Go in haste ! lest the roar of the
thunder anearning

Should blast you to idiocy, living
and hearing

Chorus Change thy speech for
another, thy thought for a
new,

If to move me and teach me,
indeed be thy care !
For thy words swerve so far from
the loyal and true,

That the thunder of Zeus seems
more easy to bear
How ! couldst teach me to venture
such villainess ? Behold !

I choose, with this victim, this
anguish foretold !

I recoil from the traitor in hate
and disdain,—

And I know that the curse of the
treason is worse

Than the pang of the chain

Hermes Then remember, O
nymphs, what I tell you before,—

Nor, when pierced by the arrows
that Atë will throw you,
Cast blame on your fate, and
declare evermore

That Zeus thrust you on anguish
he did not foreshow you

Nay, verily, nay ! for ye perish anon
For your deed—by your choice !—
by no blindness of doubt,

No abruptness of doom !—but by
madness alone,

In the great net of Ate, whence
none cometh out,

Ye are wound and undone !

Prometheus Ay ! in act, now—in
word now, no more,

Earth is rocking in space !

And the thunders crash up with a
roar upon roar—

And the eddying lightnings flash
fire in my face—

And the whirlwinds are whirling the
dust round and round—

And the blasts of the winds univer-
sal, leap free

And blow each upon each with a pas-
sion of sound,—

And æther goes mingling in storm
with the sea !

Such a curse on my head, in a mani-
fest dread,

From the hand of your Zeus has been
hurtled along !

O my mother's fair glory ! O Æther,
enringing,

All eyes with the sweet common light
of thy bringing,

* Dost see how I suffer this
wrong ?

MISCELLANEOUS POEMS

1833

THE TEMPEST

A FRAGMENT

"Mors erat ante oculos"—*Lucan*, lib ix

THE forest made my home—the
voiceful streams
My minstrel throng the everlasting
hills,—

Which marry with the firmament,
and cry
Unto the brazen thunder, "Come
away,
Come from thy secret place, and try
our strength,"—
Enwrapp'd me with their solemn
arms Here, light
Grew pale as darkness, scared by the
shade
O' the forest Titans Here, in piny
state,
Reign'd Night, the Æthiopian queen,
and crown'd
The charmed brow of Solitude, her
spouse

A sign was on creation You beheld
All things encolour'd in a sulph'rous
hue,
As day were sick with fear The
haggard clouds
O'erhung the utter lifelessness of air,
The top boughs of the forest all
aghast,
Stared in the face of Heav'n, the
deep-mouth'd wind,
That hath a voice to bay the armed
sea,
Fled with a low cry like a beaten
hound,
And only that askance the shadows,
flew
Some open-beaked birds in wilder-
ment,
Naught stirr'd abroad All dumb
did Nature seem,
In expectation of the coming storm

It came in power You soon might
hear afar
The footsteps of the martial thunder
sound
Over the mountain battlements, the
sky
Being deep-stain'd with hues fantas-
tical,
Red like to blood, and yellow like to
fire,
And black like plumes at funerals,
overhead
You might behold the lightning
faintly gleam

Amid the clouds which thrill and
gape aside,
And straight again shut up their
solemn jaws,
As if to interpose between Heaven's
wrath
And Earth's despair Interposition
brief!
Darkness is gathering out her mighty
pall
Above us, and the pent-up rain is
loosed,
Down trampling in its fierce delirium
Was not my spirit gladden'd, as
with wine,
To hear the iron rain, and view the
mark
Of battle on the banner of the clouds?
Did I not harken for the battle-cry,
And rush along the bowing woods to
meet
The riding Tempest—skyey cataracts
Hissing around him with rebellion
vain?
Yea! and I lifted up my glorying
voice
In an "All hail," when, wildly
resonant,
As brazen chariots rushing from the
war,
As passion'd waters gushing from
the rock,
As thousand crashed woods, the
thunder cried
And at his cry the forest tops were
shook
As by the woodman's axe, and far
and near
Stagger'd the mountains with a
mutter'd dread
All hail unto the lightning! hurriedly
His lurid arms are glaring through
the air,
Making the face of Heav'n to show
like hell!
Let him go breathe his sulphur
stench about,
And, pale with death's own mission,
lord the storm!
Again the gleam—the glare I
turn'd to hail
Death's mission at my feet there
lay the dead!
The dead—the dead lay there! I
could not view

<p>(For Night espoused the storm, and made all dark) Its features, but the lightning in his course Shiver'd above a white and corpse- like heap, Stretch'd in the path, as if to show his prey, And have a triumph ere he pass'd Then I Crouch'd down upon the ground, and groped about Until I touch'd that thing of flesh rain-drench'd, And chill, and soft Nathless, I did refrain My soul from natural horror ! I did lift The heavy head, half-bedded in the clay, Unto my knee, and pass'd my fingers o'er The wet face, touching every linea- ment, Until I found the brow, and chafed its chill, To know if life yet linger'd in its pulse And while I was so busied, there did leap From out the entrails of the firma- ment The lightning, who his white un- blanching breath Blew in the dead man's face, dis- cov'ring it As by a staring day I knew that face— His, who did hate me—his, whom I did hate ! I shrunk not—spake not—sprang not from the ground ! But felt my lips shake without cry or breath, And mine heart wrestle in my breast to still The tossing of its pulses, and a cold, Instead of living blood, o'ercreep my brow Albert such darkness brooded all around, I had dread knowledge that the open eyes Of that dead man were glaring up to mine,</p>	<p>With their unwinking, unexpressive stare, And mine I could not shut nor turn away The man was my familiar I had borne Those eyes to scowl on me their living hate, Better than I could bear their dead liness I had endured the curses of those lips, Far better than their silence Oh constrain'd And awful silence !—awful peace of death ! <i>There</i> is an answering to all question- ing, That one word—<i>death</i> Our bitter- ness can throw No look upon the face of death, and live The burning thoughts that erst my soul illumed, Were quench'd at once, as tapers in a pit Wherein the vapour-witches weirdly reign In charge of darkness Farewell all the past ! It was out-blotted from my memory's eyes, When clay's cold silence pleaded for its sin Farewell the elemental war ! fare- well The clashing of the shielded clouds— the cry Of scathed echoes ! I no longer knew Silence from sound, but wander'd far away Into the deep Eleusis of mine heart, To learn its secret things When armed foes Meet on one deck with impulse vio- lent, The vessel quakes thro' all her oaken ribs, And shivers in the sea, so with mine heart For there had battled in her solitudes, Contrary spirits, sympathy with power, And stooping unto power,—the energy</p>
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And passiveness,—the thunder and
the death !

Within me was a nameless thought
it closed

The Janus of my soul on echoing
hinge,

And said "Peace !" with a voice
like War's I bow'd,

And trembled at its voice it gave
a key,

Empower'd to open out all mysteries
Of soul and flesh, of man, who doth
begin,

But endeth not, of life, and *after life*

* * *

Day came at last her light show'd
grey and sad,

As hatch'd by tempest, and could
scarce prevail

Over the shaggy forest to imprint
Its outline on the sky—expressionless,

Almost sans shadow as sans radiance
An idiocy of light I waken'd from

My deep unslumb'ring dream, but
utter'd naught

My living I uncoupled from the dead,
And look'd out, 'mid the swart and

sluggish air,

For place to make a grave A
mighty tree

Above me, his gigantic arms out-
stretch'd,

Poising the clouds A thousand
mutter'd spells

Of every ancient wind and thund'rous
storm,

Had been off-shaken from his scath-
less bark

He had heard distant years sweet
concord yield,

And go to silence, having firmly kept
Majestical companionship with Time

Anon his strength wax'd proud his
tusk roots

Forced for themselves a path on
every side,

Riving the earth, and, in their
savage scorn,

Casting it from them like a thing
unclean,

Which might impede his naked
clambering

Unto the heavens Now blasted,
peel'd, he stood,

By the gone night, whose lightning
had come in

And rent him, even as it rent the man
Beneath his shade and there the

strong and weak
Communion join'd in deathly agony

There, underneath, I lent my fever-
ish strength,

To scoop a lodgment for the traveller's
corse

I gave it to the silence and the pit,
And strew'd the heavy earth on all

and then—
I—I, whose hands had form'd that

silent house,—
I could not look thereon, but turn'd
and wept !

* * *

O Death—O crowned Death—pale-
steeded Death !

Whose name doth make our respira-
tion brief,

Muffling the spirit's drum ! Thou,
whom men know

Alone by charnel-houses, and the dark
Sweeping of funeral feathers, and the

scath
Of happy days,—love deem'd in-
volute !

Thou of the shrouded face, which to
have seen

Is to be very awful like thyself !—
Thou, whom all flesh shall see !—

thou, who dost call
And there is none to answer !—thou,

whose call
Changeth all beauty into what we

fear,
Changeth all glory into what we

tread,
Genius to silence, wrath to nothing-

ness,
And love—not love !—thou hast no

change for love !
Thou, who art Life's betroth'd, and

bear'st her forth
To scare her with sad sights,—who

hast thy joy
Where'er the peopled towns are dumb

with plague,—
Where'er the battle and the vulture

meet,—
Where'er the deep sea writhes like

Laocoon

Beneath the serpent winds, and
vessels split
On secret rocks, and men go gurgling
down,
Down, down, to lose their shriekings
in the depth !
O universal thou ! who comest aye
Among the minstrels, and their
tongue is tied,—
Among the sophists, and their brain
is still,—
Among the mourners, and their wail
is done,—
Among the dancers, and their tink-
ling feet
No more make echoes on the tombing
earth,—
Among the wassail rout, and all the
lamps
Are quench'd, and wither'd the wine-
pouring hands !
My heart is armed not in panoply
Of the old Roman iron, nor assumes
The Stoic valour 'Tis a human heart,
And so confesses, with a human
fear,—
That only for the hope the Cross
inspires,
That only for the MAN Who died and
lives,
'Twould crouch beneath thy sceptre's
royalty,
With faintness of the pulse, and
backward cling
To life But knowing what I soothly
know,
High-seeming Death, I dare thee !
and have hope,
In God's good time, of showing to thy
face
An unsuccumbing spirit, which
sublime
May cast away the low anxieties
That wait upon the flesh—the reptile
moods,
And enter that eternity to come,
Where live the dead, and only Death
shall die

A SEA-SIDE MEDITATION

"Ut per aquas quæ nunc rerum simulacra
videmus" —*Lucretius*, lib 1

Go, travel 'mid the hills ! The
summer's hand
Hath shaken pleasant freshness o'er
them all

Go, travel 'mid the hills ! There,
tuneful streams
Are touching myriad stops, invisible,
And winds, and leaves, and birds,
and your own thoughts,
(Not the least glad) in wordless
chorus, crowd
Around the thymel¹ of Nature
Go,
And travel onward Soon shall leaf
and bird,
Wind stream, no longer sound
Thou shalt behold
Only the pathless sky, and houseless
sward,
O'er which anon are spied innumerable
sails
Of fisher vessels like the wings o' the hull,
And white as gulls above them, and
as fast—
But sink they—sink they out of sight
And now
The wind is springing upward in your
face,
And, with its fresh-toned gushings,
you may hear
Continuous sound which is not of the
wind,
Nor of the thunder, nor o' the cata-
ract's
Deep passion, nor o' the earthquake's
wilder pulse,
But which rolls on in stern tran-
quility,
As memories of evil o'er the soul,
Boweth the bare broad Heaven—
What view you ? sea—and sea !
The sea—the glorious sea ! from side
to side,
Swinging the grandeur of his foamy
strength,
And undersweeping the horizon,—
on—
On—with his life and voice in-
scrutable
Pause sit you down in silence ! I
have read
Of that Athenian, who, when ocean
raged,
Uncham'd the prison'd music of his
lips
By shouting to the billows, sound for
sound

¹ The central point of the choral movements
in the Greek theatre

I marvel how his mind would let his
 tongue
 Affront thereby the ocean's solemn-
 ness
 Are we not mute, or speak restrainedly,
 When overhead the trampling tem-
 pests go,
 Dashing their lightning from their
 hoofs ? and when
 We stand beside the bier ? and when
 we see
 The strong bow down to weep—and
 stray among
 Places which dust or mind hath
 sanctified ?
 Yea ! for such sights and acts do tear
 apart
 The close and subtle clasping of a
 chain,
 Form'd not of gold, but of corroded
 brass,
 Whose links are furnish'd from the
 common mine
 Of every day's event, and want, and
 wish,
 From work-times, diet-times, and
 sleeping-times
 And thence constructed, mean and
 heavy links
 Within the pandemonic walls of sense,
 Enchain our deathless part, constrain
 our strength,
 And waste the goodly stature of our
 soul
 Howbeit, we love this bondage,
 we do cleave
 Unto the sordid and unholy thing,
 Fearing the sudden wrench required
 to break
 Those clasped links Behold ! all
 sights and sounds
 In air, and sea, and earth, and under
 earth,
 All flesh, all life, all ends, are
 mysteries,
 And all that is mysterious dreadful
 seems,
 And all we cannot understand we fear
 Ourselves do scare ourselves we
 hide our sight
 In artificial nature from the true,
 And throw sensation's veil associative
 On God's creation, man's intelligence,
 Bowing our high imaginings to eat
 Dust, like the serpent, once erect as
 they,

Binding conspicuous on our reason's
 brow
 Phylacteries of shame, learning to
 feel
 By rote, and act by rule (man's rule,
 not God's !)
 Until our words grow echoes, and our
 thoughts
 A mechanism of spirit
 Can this last ?
 No ! not for aye We cannot subject
 aye
 The heav'n-born spirit to the earth-
 born flesh
 Tame lions will scent blood, and
 appetite
 Carnivorous glare from out their rest-
 less eyes
 Passions, emotions, sudden changes,
 throw
 Our nature back upon us, till we burn
 What warmed Cyrene's fount ? As
 poets sing,
 The *change* from light to dark, from
 dark to light

All that doth force this nature back
 on us,
 All that doth force the mind to view
 the mind,
 Engend'reth what is named by men,
sublime
 Thus when, our wonted valley left,
 we gain
 The mountam's horrent brow, and
 mark from thence
 The sweep of lands extending with
 the sky,
 Or view the spanless plain, or turn
 our sight
 Upon yon deep immensity,—we
 breathe
 As if our breath were marble to
 and fro
 Do reel our pulses, and our words are
 mute
 We cannot mete by parts, but grapple
 all,
 We cannot measure with our eye, but
 soul,
 And fear is on us The extent unused,
 Our spirit, sends, to spirit's element,
 To seize upon abstractions first on
 space,
 The which *eternity in place*, I deem,
 And then upon eternity, till thought

Hath form'd a mirror from their
secret sense,
Wherein we view ourselves, and back
recoil
At our own awful likeness, ne'ertheless,
Cling to that likeness with a wonder
wild,
And while we tremble, glory—proud
in fear

So ends the prose of life and so shall
be
Unlock'd her poetry's magnific store
And so, thou pathless and perpetual
sea,
So o'er thy deeps, I brooded and
must brood,
Whether I view thee in thy dreadful
peace,
Like a spent warrior hanging in the
sun
His glittering arms, and meditating
death,
Or whether thy wild visage gath'reth
shades,
What time thou marshall'st forth
thy waves who hold
A covenant of storms, then roar and
wind
Under the rocking rocks, as martyrs
lie
Wheel-bound, and dying, utter
lofty words!
Whether the strength of day is young
and high,
Or whether, weary of the watch, he
sits
Pale on thy wave, and weeps himself
to death,—
In storm and calm, at morn and even-
tide,
Still have I stood beside thee, and out-
thrown
My spirit onward on thine element,—
Beyond thine element,—to tremble
low
Before those feet which trod thee as
they trod
Earth,—to the holy, happy peopled
place,
Where there is no more sea Yea,
and my soul,
Having put on thy vast similitude,
Hath wildly moaned at her proper
depth,

Echoed her proper musings, veil'd in
shade
Her secrets of decay, and exercised
An elemental strength, in casting up
Rare gems and things of death on
fancy's shore,
Till Nature said, "Enough"
Who longest dreams,
Dreams not for ever, seeing day and
night
And corporal feebleness divide his
dreams,
And, on his elevate creations weigh
With hunger, cold, heat, darkness,
weariness
Else should we be like gods, else
would the course
Of thought's free wheels, increased in
speed and might,
By an eterne volution, oversweep
The heights of wisdom, and invade her
depths
So, knowing all things, should we have
all power,
For is not knowledge power? But
mighty spells
Our operation sear, the Babel must,
Or ere it touch the sky, fall down to
earth
The web, half form'd, must tumble
from our hands,
And, ere they can resume it lie
decay'd
Mind struggles vainly from the flesh
E'en so,
Hell's angel (saith a scroll apocryphal)
Shall when the latter days of earth
have shrunk
Before the blast of God, affect his
heav'n,
Lift his scarr'd brow, confirm his rebel
heart,
Shoot his strong wings, and darken
pole and pole,—
Till day be blotted into night, and
shake
The fever'd clouds, as if a thousand
storms
Throbb'd into life! Vain hope—
vain strength—vain flight!
God's arm shall meet God's foe, and
hurl him back!

A VISION OF LIFE AND DEATH
MINE ears were deaf to melody,
My lips were dumb to sound

Where didst thou wander, O my soul,
When ear and tongue were bound ?

" I wandered by the stream of time,
Made dark by human tears
I threw my voice upon the waves,
And *they* did throw me theirs "

And how did sound the waves, my
soul ?

And how did sound the waves ?
" Hoarse, hoarse, and wild !—they
ever dash'd
'Gainst ruin'd thrones and graves "

And what sight on the shore my soul ?
And what sight on the shore ?

" Twain beings sate there silently,
And sit there evermore "

Now tell me fast and true, my soul,
Now tell me of those twain

" One was yclothed in mourning vest,
And one, in trappings vain

" She in the trappings vain, was fair,
And eke fantastical

A thousand colours dyed her garb,
A blackness bound them all

" In part her hair was gaily wreath'd,
In part was wildly spread

Her face did change its hue too fast,
To say 'twas pale or red

" And when she look'd on earth, I
thought

She smiled for very glee
But when she look'd to heav'n, I
knew

That tears stood in her ee

" She held a mirror, there to gaze
It could no cheer bestow,

For while her beauty cast the shade,
Her breath did make it go

" A harper's harp did lie by her,
Without the harper's hest,

A monarch's crown did lie by her,
Wherein an owl had nest

" A warrior's sword did lie by her,
Grown rusty since the fight,

A poet's lamp did lie by her —
Ah me !—where was its light ? "

And what didst *thou* say O my soul,
Unto that mystic dame ?

" I ask'd her of her tears and eke
I ask'd her of her name

" She said, she built a prince's
throne

She said, he ruled the grave,
And that the levelling worm ask'd
not

If he were king or slave

" She said, she form'd a godlike
tongue,

Which lofty thoughts unsheathed,
Which roll'd its thunder round, and
purged

The air the nations breathed

" She said that tongue, all eloquent,
With silent dust did mate

Whereon false friends betray'd long
faith,

And foes outspat their hate

" She said, she warm'd a student's
heart,

But heart and brow 'gan fade

Alas, alas ! those Delphic trees
Do cast an upas shade !

" She said, she lighted happy
hearths,

Whose mirth was all forgot

She said, she tuned marriage bells,
Which rang when love was *not*

" She said, her name was Life, and
then

Out laugh'd and wept aloud,—

What time the other being strange
Lifted the veiling shroud

" Yea ! lifted she the veiling shroud,
And breathed the icy breath,

Whereat, with inward shuddering,
I knew *her* name was Death

" Yea ! lifted she her calm, calm
brow

Her clear cold smile on me

Whereat within my deepness, leap'd
Mine immortality

" She told me, it did move her smile,
To witness how I sigh'd,

Because that what was fragile brake,
And what was mortal died

" As if that kings could grasp the
earth,

Who from its dust began,

As if that suns could shine at night,
Or glory dwell with man

"She told me, she had freed *his* soul,
 Who aye did freedom love,
 Who now reck'd not, were worms
 below,
 Or ranker worms above!"

"She said, the student's heart had
 beat

Against its prison dim,
 Until she crush'd the bars of flesh,
 And pour'd truth's light on him

"She said, that they who left the
 hearth,

For aye in sunshine dwell,
 She said, the funeral tolling brought
 More joy than marriage bell!"

"And as she spake, she spake less
 loud,

The stream resounded more
 Anon I nothing heard but waves,
 That wail'd along the shore"

And what didst thou say, O my soul,
 Upon that mystic strife?

"I said, that Life was only Death,
 That only Death was Life"

EARTH

How beautiful is earth! my starry
 thoughts

Look down on it from their unearthly
 sphere,

And sing symphonious—Beautiful is
 earth!

The lights and shadows of her myriad
 hills,

The branching greenness of her myriad
 woods,

Her sky-affecting rocks, her zoning
 sea,

Her rushing, gleaming cataracts,
 her streams

That race below, the winged clouds
 on high,

Her pleasantness of vale and meadow!—

Hush!

Meseemeth through the leafy trees
 to ring

A chime of bells to falling waters
 tuned,

Whereat comes heathen Zephyrus,
 out of breath

With running up the hills, and shakes
 his hair

From off his gleesome forehead bold
 and glad

With keeping blythe Dan Phœbus
 company,—

And throws him on the grass, though
 half afraid,

First glancing round, lest tempests
 should be nigh,

And lays close to the ground his
 ruddy lips,

And shapes their beauty into sound,
 and calls

On all the petal'd flowers, that sit
 beneath

In hiding-places from the rain and
 snow,

To loosen the hard soil, and leave
 their cold

Sad idlesse, and betake them up to him
 They straightway hear his voice—

A thought did come

And press from out my soul the
 heathen dream

Mine eyes were purged Straight-
 way did I bind

Round me the garment of my
 strength, and heard

Nature's death-shrieking—the here-
 after cry,

When he o' the lion voice, the
 rainbow-crowned,

Shall stand upon the mountains and
 the sea,

And swear by earth, by Heaven's
 throne, and Him

Who sitteth on the throne, there
 shall be time

No more, no more! Then, veil'd
 Eternity

Shall straight unveil her awful coun-
 tenance

Unto the reeling worlds, and take
 the place

Of seasons years, and ages Aye
 and aye

Shall be the time of day The
 wrinkled heav'n

Shall yield her silent sun, made blind
 and white

With an exterminating light the
 wind,

Unchained from the poles, nor having
 charge

Of cloud or ocean, with a sobbing
 wail

Shall rush among the stars, and
swoon to death
Yea, the shrunk earth, appearing
livid pale
Beneath the red-tongued flame,
shall shudder by
From out her ancient place, and
leave—a void
Yet haply by that void the saints
redeem'd
May sometimes stray, when memory
of sin
Ghost-like shall rise upon their
holy souls,
And on their lips shall lie the name of
earth
In paleness and in silentness, until
Each looking on his brother, face to
face,
And bursting into sudden happy tears,
(The only tears undried) shall mur-
mur—"Christ!"

THE PICTURE GALLERY AT PENSURST

THEY spoke unto me from the
silent ground,
They look'd unto me from the
pictured wall
The echo of my footstep was a
sound
Like to the echo of their own
footfall,
What time their living feet were
in the hall
I breathed where they had breathed
—and where they brought
Their souls to moralise on glory's
pall,
I walked with silence in a cloud of
thought
So, what they erst had learn'd, I
mine own spirit taught
Ay! with mine eyes of flesh, I did
behold
The likeness of their flesh! They,
the great dead
Stood still upon the canvas, while I
told
The glorious memories to their ashes
wed
There, I beheld the Sidneys—he,
who bled
Freely for freedom's sake, bore
gallantly

His soul upon his brow,—he,
whose lute said
Sweet music to the land, meseem'd
to be
Dreaming with that pale face, of
love and Arcadie
Mine heart had shrined these And
therefore past
Where these and such as these, in
mine heart's pride,
Which deem'd death, glory's other
name At last
I stay'd my pilgrim feet, and
paused beside
A picture,¹ which the shadows half
did hide
The form was a fair woman's form,
the brow
Brightly between the clustering
curls espied
The cheek a little pale, yet seeming
so
As, if the lips could speak, the pale-
ness soon would go

And rested there the lips, so warm
and loving,
That, they *could* speak, one might
be fain to guess
Only they had been much too
bright, if moving,
To stay by their own will, all
motionless
One outstretch'd hand its marble
seal 'gan press
On roses which look'd fading,
while the eyes,
Uplifted in a calm, proud loveliness,
Seem'd busy with their flow'ry
destinies,
Drawing, for ladye's heart, some
moral quaint and wise

She perish'd like her roses I did
look
On her, as she did look on them—
to sigh!
Alas, alas! that the fair-written
book
Of her sweet face, should be in
death laid by,
As any blotted scroll! Its cruelty
Poison'd a heart most gentle-
pulsed of all,

¹ Vandyke's portrait of Waller's Saccharissa

And turn'd it into song, therein to die
 For grief's stern tension maketh musical,
 Unless the strain'd string break or ere the music fall

Worship of Waller's heart ! no dream of thine
 Reveal'd unto thee, that the lowly one,
 Who sate enshadow'd near thy beauty's shine,
 Should when the light was out, the life was done,
 Record thy name with those by Memory won
 From Time's eternal burial I am woo'd
 By wholesome thoughts this sad thought hath begun,
 For mind is strengthen'd when awhile subdued,
 As he who touch'd the earth, and rose with power renewed

TO A POET'S CHILD

A FAR harp swept the sea above,
 A far voice said thy name in love
 Then silence on the harp was cast,
 The voice was chain'd—the love went last !

And as I heard the melodie,
 Sweet-voiced Fancy spake of thee
 And as the silence o'er it came,
 Mine heart, in silence, sigh'd thy name

I thought there was one only place,
 Where thou couldst lift thine orphan'd face

A little home for prayer and woe,—
 A stone above—a shroud below,—

That evermore, that stone beside,
 Thy wither'd joys would form thy pride,

As palm-trees, on their South Sea bed,
 Make islands with the flowers they shed

Child of the Dead ! my dream of thee
 Was sad to tell, and dark to see,
 And vain as many a brighter dream,
 Since thou canst sing by Babel's stream !

For here, amid the worldly crowd,
 'Mid common brows, and laughter loud,
 And hollow words, and feelings sere,
 Child of the Dead ! I meet thee here !

And is thy step so fast and light ?
 And is thy smile so gay and bright ?
 And canst thou smile, with cheek undim

Upon a world that frowned on *him* ?

The minstrel's harp is on his bier,
 What doth the minstrel's orphan here ?

The loving moulders in the clay,
 The loved,—she keepeth holyday !

'Tis well ! I would not doom thy years

Of golden prime, to only tears
 Fair girl ! 'twere better that thine eyes
 Should find a joy in summer skies,

As if their sun were on thy fate
 Be happy, strive not to be great,
 And go not, from thy kind apart,
 With lofty soul and stricken heart

Think not too deeply shallow thought,
 Like open rills, is ever sought
 By light and flowers, while fountains deep

Amid the rocks and shadows sleep

Feel not too warmly, lest thou be
 Too like Cyrene's waters free,
 Which burn at night, when all around

In darkness and in chill is found

Touch not the harp to win the wreath
 Its tone is false, its echo death !
 The wreath may like the laurel grow,

Yet turns to cypress on the brow !

And, as a flame springs clear and bright,

Yet leaveth ashes 'stead of light,
 So genius (fatal gift !) is doom'd
 To leave the heart it fired, consumed

For thee, for thee, thou orphan'd one,
 I make an humble orison !

Love all the world, and ever dream
 That all are true who truly seem

Forget ! for, so, 'twill move thee not,
Or lightly move, to be forgot !
Be streams thy music, hills, thy
 mirth,
Thy chiefest light, the household
 hearth

So, when grief plays her natural part,
And visiteth thy quiet heart
Shall all the clouds of grief be seen
To show a sky of hope between

So, when thy beauty senseless lies,
No sculptured urn shall o'er thee rise,
But gentle eyes shall weep at will
Such tears as hearts like thine distil

MINSTRELSY

" One asked her once the resun why
She hadde delyte in minstrelsie,
She answered on this manere

—Robert de Brunne

For ever, since my childish looks
Could rest on Nature's pictured
 books,

For ever, since my childish tongue
Could name the themes our bards
 have sung,

So long, the sweetness of their
 singing

Ha'th been to me a rapture bringing !—
Yet ask me not the reason why
I have delight in minstrelsy

I know that much whereof I sing
Is shapen but for vanishing,
I know that summer's flower and leaf
And shine and shade are very brief,
And that the heart they brighten,
 may,

Before them all, be sheathed in clay !—
I do not know the reason why
I have delight in minstrelsy

A few there are, whose smile and
 praise

My minstrel hope would kindly raise
But, of those few—Death may im-
 press

The lips of some with silentness,
While some may friendship's faith
 resign,

And heed no more a song of mine —
Ask not ask not the reason why
I have delight in minstrelsy

The sweetest song that minstrels sing
Will charm not joy to tarrying,

The greenest bay that earth can
 grow,
Will shelter not in burning woe,
A thousand voices will not cheer,
When one is mute that aye is dear !—
Is there, alas ! no reason why
I have delight in minstrelsy ?

I do not know ! The turf is green
Beneath the rain's fast-dropping
 sheen,

Yet asks not why that deeper hue
Doth all its tender leaves renew,—
And I, like-minded, am content,
While music to my soul is sent,
To question not the reason why
I have delight in minstrelsy

Years pass—my life with them shall
 pass

And soon, the cricket in the grass,
And summer bird, shall louder sing
Than she who owns a minstrel's
 string

Oh, then may some, the dear and few,
Recall her love, whose truth they
 knew,

When all forget to question why
She had delight in minstrelsy !

TO THE MEMORY OF SIR UVEDALE PRICE, BART

FAREWELL !—a word that human
 lips bestow

On all that human hearts delight to
 know

On summer skies, and scenes that
 change as fast,

On ocean calms, and faith as fit to
 last,

On Life, from Love's own arms that
 breaks away,

On hopes that blind, and glories that
 decay !

And ever thus, " farewell, farewell,"
 is said,

As round the hills of lengthening time,
 we tread,

As at each step the winding ways
 unfold

Some untried prospect which obscures
 the old,—

Perhaps a prospect brightly colour'd
 o'er,

Yet not with brightness that we loved
 before,

And dull and dark the brightest hue
appears
To eyes like ours, surcharged and dim
with tears
Off, off we wish the winding road
were past,
And yon supernal summit gain'd at
last,
Where all that gradual change re-
moved, is found
At once, for ever, as you look
around,
Where every scene by tender eyes
survey'd,
And lost and wept for, to their gaze
is spread—
No tear to dim the sight, no shade to
fall,
But Heaven's own sunshine lighting,
charming all
Farewell!—a common word—and
yet how drear
And strange it soundeth as I write it
here!
How strange that *thou* a place of
death shouldst fill,
Thy brain unlighted, and thine heart
grown chill!
And dark the eye whose plausible
glance to draw
Incited Nature brake her tyrant's
law!
And deaf the ear, to charm whose
organ true,
Mæonian Music tuned her harp
anew!
And mute the lips where Plato's bee
hath roved,
And motionless the hand that genius
moved!—
Ah, friend! thou speakest not!—but
still to me
Do Genius, Music Nature, speak of
thee!—
Still golden fancy, still the sounding
line,
And waving wood, recall some word
of thine
Some word, some look, whose living
light is o'er—
And Memory sees what Hope can see
no more
Twice, twice, thy voice hath spoken
Twice there came

To us a change, a joy—to thee, a
fame!
Thou spakest once,¹ and every pleas-
ant sight
Woods waving wild, and fountains
gushing bright,
Cool copses, grassy banks, and all the
dyes
Of shade and sunshine gleam'd before
our eyes
Thou spakest twice,² and every
pleasant sound
Its ancient silken harmony unwound,
From Doric pipe and Attic lyre that
lay
Enclasp'd in hands whose cunning is
decay
And now no more thou speakest!
Death hath met
And won thee to him! Oh, remem-
ber'd yet!
We cannot *see*, and *harken*, and
forget!
My thoughts are far I think upon
the time,
When Foxley's purple hills and woods
sublime
Were thrilling at thy step, when
thou didst throw
Thy burning spirit on the vale below,
To bathe its sense in beauty Lovely
ground!
There never more shall step of thine
resound!
There, Spring again shall come, but
find thee not,
And deck with humid eyes her
favourite spot,
Strew tender green on paths thy foot
forsakes,
And make that fair, which Memory
saddest makes
For me, all sorrowful, unused to
raise
A minstrel song and dream not of thy
praise,
Upon thy grave my tuneless harp I lay,
Nor try to sing what only tears can
say
So warm and fast the ready waters
swell—
So weak the faltering voice thou
knewest well!

¹ Essay on the Picturesque

² Essay on the Pronunciation of the Ancient Languages

Thy words of kindness calm'd that
voice before,
Now, thoughts of *them* but make it
tremble more,
And leave its theme to others, and
depart
To dwell within the silence where
thou art

THE AUTUMN

Go, sit upon the lofty hill,
And turn your eyes around,
Where waving woods and waters wild
Do hymn an autumn sound
The summer sun is faint on them—
The summer flowers depart—
Sit still—as all transform'd to stone,
Except your musing heart

How there you sat in summer-time,
May yet be in your mind,
And how you heard the green woods
sing

Beneath the freshening wind
Though the same wind now blows
around,

You would its blast recall,
For every breath that stirs the trees
Doth cause a leaf to fall

Oh! like that wind, is all the mirth
That flesh and dust impart,
We cannot bear its visitings,
When change is on the heart
Gay words and jests may make us
smile,

When Sorrow is asleep,
But other things must make us smile,
When Sorrow bids us *weep!*

The dearest hands that clasp our
hands,—

Their presence may be o'er
The dearest voice that meets our ear,
That tone may come no more!
Youth fades, and then, the joys of
youth,

Which once refresh'd our mind,
Shall come—as, on those sighing
woods,

The chilling autumn wind

Hear not the wind—view not the
woods,

Look out o'er vale and hill
In spring, the sky encircled them—
The sky is round them still

Come autumn's scathe—come winter's
cold—

Come change—and human fate!
Whatever prospect HEAVEN doth
bound
Can ne'er be desolate

THE DEATH-BED OF TERESA DEL RIEGO

— 'Si fia muta ogni altra cosa, al fine
Parlera il mio morire,
E ti dirà la morte il mio martire "

—Guarini

THE room was darken'd, but a wan
lamp shed
Its light upon a half-uncurtain'd
bed,

Whereon the widow'd sate Black-
ly as death

Her veiling hair hung round her, and
no breath

Came from her lips to motion it
Between

Its parted clouds, the calm fair face
was seen

In a snow paleness, and snow silent-
ness,

With eyes unquenchable, whereon
did press

A little, their white lids, so taught to
lie,

By weights of frequent tears wept
secretly

Her hands were clasp'd and raised—
the lamp did fling

A glory on her brow's meek suffering

Beautiful form of woman! seeming
made

Alone to shine in mirrors, there to
braid

The hair and zone the waist—to
garland flowers—

To walk like sunshine through the
orange bowers—

To strike her land's guitar—and
often see

In other eyes how lovely hers must
be

Grew she acquaint with anguish?
Did she sever

For ever from the one she loved for
ever,

To dwell among the strangers? Ay!
and she,

Who shone most brightly in that
festive glee,
Sate down in this despair most
patiently
Some hearts are Niobes ! In grief's
down-sweeping,
They turn to very stone from over-
weeping,
And after, feel no more Hers did
remain
In life, which is the power of feeling
pain,
Till pain consumed the life so call'd
below
She heard that he was dead !—she
ask'd not how—
For *he* was dead ! She wail'd not
o'er his urn,
For *he* was dead—and in *her* hands,
should burn
His vestal flame of honour radiantly
Sighing would dim its light—she did
not sigh
She only died They laid her in the
ground,
Whereon th' unloving tread, and
accents sound
Which are not of her Spain She
left behind,
For those among the strangers who
were kind
Unto the poor heart-broken, her
dark hair
It once was gauded out with jewels
rare,
It swept her dying pillow—it doth lie
Beside me (thank the giver), droop-
ingly,
And very long and bright ! Its tale
doth go
Half to the dumb grave, half to life-
time woe,
Making the heart of man, if manly,
ring
Like Dodonæan brass, with echoing

TO VICTOIRE, ON HER MARRIAGE

VICTOIRE ! I knew thee in thy land,
Where I was strange to all
I heard thee, and were strange to me
The words thy lips let fall.
I loved thee—for the Babel curse
Was meant not for the heart

I parted from thee, in such way
As those who love may part
And now a change hath come to us,
A sea doth rush between !
I do not know if we can be
Again as we have been
I sit down in mine English land,
Mine English hearth beside,
And thou, to one I never knew,
Art plighted for a bride
It will not wrong thy present joy,
With bygone days to wend
Nor wrongeth it mine English hearth,
To love my Gallic friend
Bind, bind the wreath ! the slender
ring
Thy wedded finger press !
May he who calls thy love his own,
Call so thine happiness !
Be he Terpander to thine heart,
And string fresh strings of gold,
Which may out-give new melodies,
But never mar the old !
And though I clasp no more thy hand
In my hand, and rejoice—
And though I see thy face no more,
And hear no more thy voice—
Farewell farewell !—let thought of me
Visit thine heart ! There is
In mine the very selfish prayer
That prayeth for thy bliss !

TO A BOY

WHEN my last song was said for thee,
Thy golden hair swept, long and free,
Around thee, and a dove-like tone
Was on thy voice—or Nature's own
And every phrase and word of thine
Went out in lisplings infantine !
Thy small steps faltering round our
hearth—
Thine een out-peering in their mirth—
Blue een ! that like thine heart,
seem'd given
To be, for ever, full of heaven !
Wert thou, in sooth, made up of glee
When my last song was said for thee ?
And now more years are finished,—
For thee another song is said
Thy voice hath lost its cooing tone,
The lisping of thy words is gone

Thy step treads firm—thine hair not
fings

Round thee its length of golden
rings—

Departed, like all lovely things !
Yet art thou still made up of glee,
When my *now* song is said for thee

Wisely and well responded they,
Who cut thy golden hair away,
What time I made the bootless
prayer,

That they should pause awhile, and
spare

They said, " its sheen did less agree
With boyhood than with infancy "
And thus I know it aye must be
Before the revel noise is done,
The revel lamps pale one by one

Ay ! Nature loveth not to bring
Crown'd victims to life's labouring
The mirth-effulgent eye appears
Less sparkling—to make room for
tears,

After the heart's quick throbs depart,
We lose the gladness of the heart
And, after we have lost awhile
The rose o' the lip we lose its smile,
As Beauty could not bear to press
Near the death-pyre of Happiness

This seemeth but a sombre dream ?
It hath more pleasant thoughts than
seem

The older a young tree doth grow,
The deeper shade it sheds below,
But makes the grass more green—
the air

More fresh, than had the sun been
there

And thus our human life is found,
Albert a darkness gathers round
For patient virtues, that their
light

May shine to all men, want the night
And holy Peace, unused to cope,
Sits meekly at the tomb of Hope,
Saying that " she is risen ! "

Then I
Will sorrow not at destiny,—
Though from thine eyes, and from
thine heart

The glory of their light depart,
Though on thy voice, and on thy brow,
Should come a fiercer change than
now,

Though thou no more be made of glee,
When my next song is said for thee

REMONSTRANCE

Oh, say not it is vain to weep
That deafen'd bier above,
Where genius has made room for
death,

And life is past from love,
That tears can never his bright looks
And tender words restore
I know it is most vain to weep—
And therefore weep the more !

Oh say not I shall cease to weep
When years have wither'd by,
That ever I shall speak of joy,
As if he could reply,
That ever mine unquivering lips
Shall name the name he bore
I know that I may cease to weep
And therefore weep the more !

Say, Time, who slew mine happiness,
Will leave to me my woe,
And woe's own stony strength shall
chain

These tears' impassion'd flow
Or say, that these, my ceaseless tears,
May life to death restore
For then my soul were wept away,
And I should weep no more !

REPLY

To weep awhile beside the bier,
Whereon his ashes lie,
Is well !—I know that rains must fall
When clouds are in the sky
I know, *to die—to part*, will cloud
The brightest spirit o'er,
And yet, wouldst *thou* for ever weep,
When *he* can weep no more ?

Fix not thy sight, so long and fast,
Upon the shroud's despair,
Look upward unto Zion's hill,
For death was also *there* !
And think, " The death, the scourge,
the scorn,

My sinless Saviour bore—
The curse—the pang, too deep for
tears—
That I should weep no more ! "

EPITAPH

BEAUTY, who softly walkest all thy
days

In silken garment to the tunes of
 praise —
 Lo'er, who's dreamings by the green-
 bank'd river,
 Where once she wander'd, fain would
 last for ever, —
 King, whom the nations scan, ador-
 ing scan,
 And shout "a god," where sin hath
 marked thee man —
 Bard, on whose brow the Hyblan dew
 remains,
 Albert the fever burneth in the
 veins —
 Hero, whose sword in tyrant's blood
 is hot, —
 Sceptic, who doubting, wouldst be
 doubted not —
 Man, whosoe'er thou art, whate'er thy
 trust, —
 Respect thyself in me, —thou
 treadest *dust*

THE IMAGE OF GOD

"I am God, and there is none like me"
 —Isaiah xli 9
 "Christ, who is the image of God
 —2 Corinthians, iv 4

Thou! art thou like to God?
 (I asked this question of the glorious
 sun)
 Thou high unwearied one,
 Whose course in heat, and light, and
 life is run?

Eagles may view thy face—clouds
 can assuage
 Thy fiery wrath—the sage
 Can mete thy stature—thou shalt
 fade with age
 Thou art not like to God

Thou! art thou like to God?
 (I asked this question of the boun-
 teous earth)
 O thou, who givest birth
 To forms of beauty and to sounds of
 mirth?

In all thy glory works the worm
 decay—
 Thy golden harvests stay
 For seed and toil—thy power shall
 pass away
 Thou art not like to God

Thou! art thou like to God?
 (I asked this question of my death-
 less soul)

O thou, whose musings roll
 Above the thunder, o'er creation's
 whole?

Thou art not Sin, and shame, and
 agony
 Within thy deepness lie
 They utter forth their voice in thee,
 and cry,
 "Thou art not like to God"

Then art Thou like to God,
 Thou, Who didst bear the sin, and
 shame and woe—
 O Thou Whose sweat did flow—
 Whose tears did gush—Whose brow
 was dead and low?

No grief is like Thy grief, no heart
 can prove
 Love like unto Thy love,
 And none, save only Thou—below,
 above,—
 O God, is like to God!

THE APPEAL

CHILDREN of our England! stand
 On the shores that girt our land,
 The ægis of whose cloud-white rock
 Braveth Time's own battle shock
 Look above the wide, wide world,
 Where the northern blasts have
 furi'd

Their numbed wings amid the snows,
 Muttering in a forced repose—
 Or where the madden'd sun on high
 Shakes his torch athwart the sky,
 Till within their prison sere
 Chained earthquakes groan for fear!
 Look above the wide, wide world,
 Where a gauntlet Sin hath hurli'd
 To astonished Life, and where
 Death's gladiatorial smile doth glare,
 On making the arena bare
 Shout aloud the words that show
 Jesus in the sands and snow,—
 Shout aloud the words that free,
 Over the perpetual sea

Speak ye As a breath will sweep
 Avalanche from Alpine steep
 So the spoken word shall roll
 Fear and darkness from the soul

Are ye men, and love not man ?
 Love ye, and permit his ban ?
 Can ye dare ye, rend the chain
 Wrought of common joy and pain,
 Claspings with its links of gold,
 Man to man in one strong hold ?

Lo ! if the golden links ye sever
 Ye shall make your heart's flesh
 quiver,
 And wheresoe'er the links are reft,
 There, shall be a blood-stain left
 To earth's remotest rock repair,
 Ye shall find a vulture there
 Though for others sorrowing not,
 Your own tears shall still be hot
 Though ye play a lonely part,
 Though ye bear an iron heart,—
 Woe, like Echetus, still must
 Grind your iron into dust

But, children of our Britain, ye
 Rend not man's chain of sympathy,
 To those who sit in woe and night,
 Denying tears and hiding light
 Ye have stretch'd your hands abroad
 With the Spirit's sheathless sword
 Ye have spoken—and the tone
 To earth's extremest verge hath gone
 East and west sublime it rolls,
 Echoed by a million souls !
 The wheels of rapid circling years,
 Erst hot with crime, are quench'd in
 tears

Rocky hearts wild waters pour,
 That were chain'd in stone before
 Bloody hands, that only bare
 Hilted sword, are clasp'd in prayer
 Savage tongues, that wont to fling
 Shout of war in deathly ring,
 Speak the name which angels sing
 Dying lips are lit the while
 With a most undying smile,
 Which reposing there, instead
 Of language, when the lips are dead,
 Saith,—“ No sound of grief or pain
 Shall haunt us when we move again ”

Children of our country ! brothers
 To the children of all others !
 Shout aloud the words that show
 Jesus in the sands and snow,—
 Shout aloud the words that free,
 Over the perpetual sea !

IDOLS

How weak the gods of this world are—
 And weaker yet their worship made
 me !

I have been an idolater
 Of three—and three times they
 betray'd me !

Mine oldest worshipping was given
 To natural Beauty, aye residing
 In bowery earth and starry heav'n,
 In ebbing sea, and river gliding

But natural Beauty shuts her bosom
 To what the natural feelings tell !
 Albert I sigh'd, the trees would
 blossom—

Albert I smiled, the blossoms fell

Then left I earthly sights, to wander
 Amid a grove of name divine,
 Where bay-reflecting streams meander,
 And Moloch Fame hath rear'd a
 shrine

Not green but black, is that reflec-
 tion,

On rocky beds those waters lie,
 That grove hath chillness and dejection,—

How could I sing ? I had to sigh

Last human Love thy Lares greeting,
 To rest and warmth I vow'd my
 years

To rest ? how wild my pulse is beat-
 ing !

To warmth ? ah me ! my burning
 tears

Ay, *they* may burn—though thou be
 frozen

By death, and changes wint'ring
 on !

Fame ! — Beauty ! — idols madly
 chosen—

Were yet of gold, but *thou* art
 STONE !

Crumble like stone ! my voice no
 longer

Shall wail their names, who silent
 be

There is a voice that soundeth
 stronger—

“ My daughter, give thine heart to
 Me ”

Lord ! take mine heart ! O first and
 fairest,
 Whom all creation's ends shall
 hear,
 Who deathless love in death de-
 clarest !
 None else is beauteous—famous—
 dear !

HYMN

" Lord, I cry unto Thee make haste unto me "
Psalms, cxli. 1

" The Lord is nigh unto all them that call upon
 Him "—*Psalms, cxlv. 18*

SINCE without Thee we do no good,
 And with Thee do no ill
 Abide with us in weal and woe,—
 In action and in will

In weal—that while our lips confess
 The Lord Who "gives," we may
 Remember, with an humble thought,
 The Lord Who "takes away"

In woe,—that, while to drowning tears
 Our hearts their joys resign,
 We may remember *Who* can turn
 Such water into wine

By hours of day,—that when our feet
 O'er hill and valley run
 We still may think the light of truth
 More welcome than the sun

By hours of night,—that when the
 air
 Its dew and shadow yields,
 We still may hear the voice of God
 In silence of the fields

Oh ! then sleep comes on us like
 death,
 All soundless, deaf, and deep

Lord ! teach us so to watch and pray,
 That death may come like sleep
 Abide with *us*, abide with *us*,
 While flesh and soul agree,
 And when our flesh is only dust,
 Abide our souls with *Thee*

WEARINESS

MINE eyes are weary of surveying
 The fairest things, too soon decaying,
 Mine ears are weary of receiving
 The kindest words—ah, past be-
 lieving !

Weary my hope, of ebb and flow,
 Weary my pulse, of tunes of woe
 My trusting heart is weariest !
 I would—I would, I were at rest !

For *me*, can earth refuse to fade ?
 For *me*, can words be faithful made ?
 Will *my* embittered hope be sweet ?
 My pulse forego the human beat ?
 No ! Darkness must consume mine
 eye—

Silence, mine ear—hope cease—
 pulse die—

And o'er mine heart a stone be
 press'd—
 Or vain this,—“ Would I were at
 rest ! ”

There is a land of rest deferr'd
 Nor eye hath seen, nor ear hath
 heard,

Nor Hope hath trod the precinct o'er,
 For hope beheld is hope no more !
 There, human pulse forgets its tone—
 There, hearts may know as they are
 known !

Oh for dove's wings, thou dwelling
 blest,
 To fly to *thee*, and be at rest !

THE SERAPHIM

[1838]

" I look for Angels' songs, and hear Him cry "—*Giles Fletcher*

PART THE FIRST

[It is the time of the Crucifix on and the
 Father of the Crucified has directed
 toward earth the angels of His
 heaven, of whom all have departed]

but the two Seraphim, ADOR the
 Strong and ZERAH the Bright One

The place is the outer side of the shut
 heavenly gate]

Ador O SERAPH, pause no more !
Beside this gate of Heaven we stand
alone

Zerah Of Heaven !

Ador Our brother hosts are gone—

Zerah Are gone before

Ador And the golden harps the
angels bore

To help the songs of their desire,
Still burning from their hands
of fire,

Lie without touch or tone

Upon the glass-sea shore

Zerah Silent upon the glass-sea
shore !

Ador There the Shadow from the
throne

Formless with infinity

Hovers o'er the crystal sea—

Awfuller than light derived,

And red with those primæval
heats

Whereby all life hath lived

Zerah Our visible God, our
heavenly seats !

Ador Beneath us sinks the pomp
angelical,

Cherub and seraph, powers and
virtues, all,—

The roar of whose descent
hath died

To a still sound, as thunder into
rain

Immeasurable space spreads
magnified

With that thick life, along the
plane

The worlds slid out on What a
fall

And eddy of wings innumer-
ous crossed

By trailing curls that have
not lost

The glitter of the God-smile
shed

On every prostrate angel's
head !

What gleaming up of hands
that fling

Their homage, in retorted
rays,

From high instinct of wor-
shipping,

And habitude of praise

Zerah Rapidly they drop below
us

Pointed palm and wing and
hair

Indistinguishable show us

Only pulses in the air

Throbbing with a fiery beat,—

As if a new creation heard

Some divine and plastic word,
And trembling at its new-found

being,

Awakened at our feet

Ador *Zerah*, do not wait for see-
ing

His voice—His,—that thrills us
so

As we our harpstrings—uttered
Go,

Behold the Holy in His woe—

And all are gone, save thee and—
Zerah Thee !

Ador I stood the nearest to the
throne

In hierarchical degree,

What time the voice said *Go*

And whether I was moved alone

By the storm-pathos of the
tone

Which swept through Heaven the
alien name of *woe*,

Or whether the subtle glory
broke

Through my stong and shielding
wings,

Bearing to my finite essence

Incapacious of their pience,

Infinite imaginings—

None knoweth save the Throned
Who spoke

But I, who, at creation, stood upright
And heard the God-Breath

move,

Shaping the words that lightened—
“Be there light,”—

Nor trembled but with love,

Now fell down shudderingly,

My face upon the pavement whence
I towered ,

As if in mine immortal overpowered
By God's eternity !

Zerah Let me wait !—let me
wait !—

Ador Nay, gaze not backward
through the gate !

God fills our heaven with God's own
solitude

Till all its pavements glow

His Godhead being no more subdued

By itself, to glories low
 Which seraphs can sustain,
 What if thou, in gazing so,
 Shouldst behold but only one
 Attribute, the veil undone—
 Even that to which we dare to press
 Nearest for its gentleness—
 Ay, His love!
 How the deep ecstatic pain
 Thy being's strength would capture!
 Without a language for the rapture,
 Without a music strong to come
 And set the adoration free,
 For ever, ever, wouldst thou be
 Amid the general chorus dumb,
 God-stricken to seraphic agony!—
 Or, brother, what if on thine
 eyes
 In vision bare should rise
 The life-fount, whence His hand did
 gather
 With solitary force
 Our immortalities!—
 Straightway how thine own would
 wither,
 Falter like a human breath,
 And shrink into a point like
 death,
 By gazing on its source!—
 My words have imaged
 dread
 Meekly hast thou bent thine
 head,
 And dropt thy wings in lan-
 guishment
 Overclouding foot and face,
 As if God's throne were emi-
 nent
 Before thee, in the place
 Yet not—not so,
 O loving spirit and meek, dost thou
 fulfil
 The supreme Will
 Not for obeisance but obedience,
 Give motion to thy wings! Depart
 from hence—
 The voice said "Go"
Zerah Beloved, I depart
 His will is as a spirit within my
 spirit,
 A portion of the being I inherit—
 His will is mine obedience I
 resemble
 A flame all undefiled though it
 tremble—

I go and tremble Love me, O be-
 loved!
 O thou, who stronger art,
 And standest ever near the Infi-
 nite,
 Pale with the light of Light!
 Love me, beloved! me, more newly
 made,
 More feeble, more afraid—
 And let me hear with mine thy
 pinions moved,
 As close and gentle as the loving
 are,
 That love being near, heaven may
 not seem so far
Ador I am near thee and I love
 thee
 Were I loveless, from thee
 gone,
 Love is round, beneath, above
 thee—
 God the omnipresent One
 Spread the wing, and lift the
 brow—
 Well-beloved, what fearest
 thou?
Zerah I fear, I fear—
Ador What fear?
Zerah The fear of earth
Ador Of earth, the God-created
 and God praised
 In the hour of birth?
 Where every night, the moon
 in light
 Doth lead the waters silver-
 faced?
 Where every day, the sun doth
 lay
 A rapture to the heart of all
 The leafy and reeded pas-
 toral,
 As if the joyous shout which
 burst
 From angel lips to see him
 first,
 Had left a silent echo in his ray?
Zerah Of earth—the God created
 and God-curst
 Where man is, and the thorn
 Where sun and moon have
 borne,
 No light to souls forlorn
 Where Eden's tree of life no more
 unrepairs
 Its spiral leaves and frutage, but
 instead

The yew-tree bows its melancholy
head,
And all the undergrasses kills and
seres

Ador A fear of earth, the weak
Mide and unmade?
Where men that faint, do strive for
crowns that fade,
Where, having won the profit which
they seek,
They lie beside the sceptre and the
gold
With fleshless hands that cannot
wield or hold,
And the stars shine in their unwink-
ing eyes?

Zerah A fear of earth the bold
Where the blind matter wrings
An awful potence out of impo-
tence,
Bowing the spiritual things
To the things of sense
Where the human will replies
With ay and no,
Because the human pulse is quick or
slow—

Where Love succumbs to Change,
With only his own memories, for
revenge,
And the fearful mystery—

Ador Called Death?

Zerah Nay! Death is fearful,—
but who saith

“To die,” is comprehensible
What’s fearfuller, thou knowest
well,

Though the utterance be not for
thee,

Lest it blanch thy lips from
glory—

Ay! the cursed thing that
moved

A shadow of ill, long times
ago,

Across our heaven’s own shining
floor!

And when it vanished, some
who were

On thrones of holy empire
there,

Did reign—were seen—were—
never more

Come nearer, O beloved!

Ador I am near thee Didst
thou bear thee
Ever to this earth?

Zerah Before!—
When thrilling from His hand
along
Its lustrous path with spheric
song,
The earth was deathless, sorrow-
less
Unfearing, then, pure feet might
press
The grasses brightening with
their feet,
For God’s own voice did mix its
sound
In a solemn confluence oft
With the rivers’ flowing round,
And the life-tree’s waving soft
Beautiful new earth, and
strange!

Ador Hast thou seen it since—
the change?

Zerah Nay! or wherefore should
I fear

To look upon it now?

I have beheld the ruined things
Only in depicturings

Of angels from an earthly
mission,

Strong one, even upon thy
brow

When with task completed,
given

Back to us in that transi-
tion,

I have beheld thee silent stand,
Abstracted in the seraph band—

Without a smile in heaven

Ador Then thou wert not one of
those

Whom the loving Father chose,
In visionary pomp to sweep

O’er Judæa’s grassy places,
O’er the shepherds and the

sheep,—
Though thou art so tender?—

dimming
All the stars except one star,

With their brighter kinder
faces,

And using heaven’s own tune in
hymning,

While deep response from earth’s
own mountains ran,

“Peace upon earth—goodwill
to man”

Zerah “Glory to God!”—I said
Amen afar

And they who from that earthly mission are,
 Within mine ears have told
 That the seven everlasting Spirits did hold
 With such a sweet and prodigal constraint
 The meaning yet the mystery of the song,
 The while they sang it, on their natures strong,
 That, gazing down on earth's dark stedfastness
 And speaking the new peace in promises,
 The love and pity made their voices faint
 Into that low and tender music, keeping
 The place in heaven, of what on earth is weeping
Ador Peace upon earth! Come down to it
Zerah Ah me!
 I hear thereof uncomprehendingly
 Peace where the tempest, where the sighing is,
 And worship of the idol, 'stead of His?
Ador Yea, peace, where *He* is
Zerah *He!*
 Say it again
Ador Where *He* is
Zerah Can it be
 That earth retains a tree
 Whose leaves, like Eden foliage, can be swayed
 By breathing of His voice, nor shrink and fade?
Ador There is a tree!—it hath no leaf nor root
 Upon it hangs a curse for all its fruit
 Its shadow on His head is laid
 For *He*, the crowned Son,
 Has left His crown and throne,—
 Walks earth in Adam's clay,
 Eve's snake to bruise and slay—
Zerah Walks earth in clay?
Ador And walking in the clay which *He* created,
He through it shall touch death
 What do I utter? what, conceive?
 Did breath
 Of demon howl it in a blasphemy?

Or was it mine own voice, inform^e!, dilated,
 By the seven confluent Spirits?—
 Speak—answer me!
 Who said man's victim was his Deity?
Zerah Beloved, beloved, the word came forth from thee
 Thine eyes are rolling a tempestuous light
 Above, below, around,
 As putting thunder-questions without cloud
 Reverberate without sound,
 To universal nature's depth and height
 The tremor of an inexpressive thought
 Too self-amazed to shape itself aloud,
 O'erruns the awful curving of thy lips
 And while thine hands are stretched above,
 As newly they had caught
 Some lightning from the Throne—
 or showed the Lord
 Some retributive sword—
 Thy brows do alternate with wild eclipse
 And radiance—with contrasted wrath and love—
 As God had called thee to a seraph's part,
 With a man's quailing heart
Ador O heart—O heart of man!
 O ta'en from human clay
 To be no seraph's, but Jehovah's own!
 Made holy in the taking,
 And yet unseparate
 From death's perpetual ban,
 And human feelings sad and passionate!
 Still subject to the treacherous forsaking
 Of other hearts, and its own steadfast pain!
 O heart of man—of God! which
 God hath ta'en
 From out the dust, with its humanity
 Mournful and weak yet innocent around it,
 And bade its many pulses beating lie
 Beside that incommunicable stir
 Of Deity wherewith *He* interwound it

O man ! and is thy nature so defiled,
That all that holy Heart's devout
law-keeping,
And low pathetic beat in deserts
wild,
And gushings pitiful of tender weep-
ing
For traitors who consigned it to such
woe—

Tha' all could cleanse thee not—
without the flow

Of blood—the life-blood—His—and
streaming so ?

O earth, the thundercleft, wind-
shaken !—where

The louder voice of " blood and
blood " doth rise !

H st thou an altar for this sacrifice ?
O heaven—O vacant throne !

O crowned hierarchies, that wear your
crown

When His is put away !

Are ye unshamed, that ye cannot dim
Yur alien brightness to be liker
Him,—

Assume a human passion—and down-
lay

Your sweet secureness for congenial
fears—

And teach your cloudless ever-burn-
ing eyes

The mystery of His tears ?

Zerah I am strong, I am strong !

Were I never to see my heaven
again,

I would wheel to earth like the tem-
pest rain

Which sweeps there with exultant
sound

To lose its life as it reaches the
ground

I am strong, I am strong !

Away from mine inward vision swim
The shining seats of my heavenly
birth—

I see but His, I see but Him—
The Maker's steps on His cruel earth

Will the bitter herbs of earth grow
sweet

To me, as trodden by His feet ?
Will the vexed, accurst humanity,

As worn by Him, begin to be
A blessed, yea, a sacred thing,

For love, and awe, and ministering ?
I am strong, I am strong !

By our angel ken, shall we survey

His loving smile through His woeful
clay ?

I am swift, I am strong—
The love is bearing me along
Ador One love is bearing two
along

PART THE SECOND

[*Mid air, above Judæa Ador and
Zerah are a little apart from the
visible Angelic Hosts*]

Ador BELOVED ! dost thou see ?—
Zerah Thee,—thee

Thy burning eyes already are
Grown wild and mournful as a
star

Whose occupation is for aye
To look upon the place of clay

Whereon thou lookest now !
The crown is fainting on thy
brow

To the likeness of a cloud—
Thy forehead's self, a little
bowed

From its aspect high and holy,
As it would in meekness meet
Some seraphic melancholy

Thy very wings that lately
flung

An outline clear, do flicker here, .
And wear to each a shadow hung,

Dropped across thy feet
In these strange contrasting
glooms

Stagnant with the scent of
tombs,

Seraph faces, O my brother,
Show awfully to one another

Ador Dost thou see ?
Zerah Even so—I see

Our empyreal company,
Alone the memory of their
brightness

Left in them, as in thee !
The circle upon circle, tier on tier,

Piling earth's hemisphere
With heavenly infiniteness ,
Above us and around,

Straining the whole horizon like a
bow ,

Their songful lips divorced from all
sound,

A darkness gliding down their silvery
glances,—

Bowing their steadfast solemn coun-
tenances

As if they heard God speak and
could not glow

Ador Look downward ' dost thou
see ?

Zerah And wouldst thou press
that vision on my words ?

Doth not Earth speak enough

Of change and of undoing

Without a Seraph's witness ?

Oceans rough

With tempest,—pastoral swards

Displaced by fiery deserts,—moun-
tains ruing

The bolt fallen yesterday,

That shake their piny heads, as who
would say,

"We are too beautiful for our
decay—"

Shall seraphs speak of these things ?

Let alone

Earth, to her earthly moan

Voice of all things Is there no
moan but *hers* ?

Ador Hearest thou the attesta-
tion

Of the roused Universe,

Like a desert lion shaking

Dews of silence from its mane ?—

With an irrepressive passion

Uprising at once,

Rising up, and forsaking

Its solemn state in the circle of suns,

To attest the pain

Of Him who stands (O patience
sweet !)

In His own hand-prints of creation,
With human feet ?

Voice of all things Is there no
moan but *ours* ?

Zerah Forms, spaces, motions
wide,

O meek, insensate things,

O congregated matters ! who inherit,

Instead of vital powers,

Impulsions God-supplied—

Instead of influent spirit,

A clear informing beauty—

Instead of creature-duty,

Submission calm as rest !

Lights, without feet or wings,

In golden courses sliding !

Glooms, stagnantly subsiding,

Whose lustrous heart away was prest
Into the argent stars !

Ye crystal, firmamental bars,

That hold the skye waters free

From tide or tempest's ecstasy !
Airs universal ! thunders lorn,
That wait your lightning in cloud-
cave

Hewn out by the winds ! O brave
And subtle Elements ! the Holy

Hath charged me by your voice
with folly !

Enough, the mystic arrow leaves its
wound

Return ye to your silences inborn,

Or to your inarticulated sound !

Ador *Zerah*

Zerah Wilt thou rebuke ?

God hath rebuked me, brother—I
am weak

Ador *Zerah*, my brother *Zerah* !
—could I speak

Of thee, 'twould be of love to thee

Zerah Thy look
Is fixed on earth, as mine upon thy
face !—

Where shall I seek *Him* ?—

I have thrown

One look upon earth—but one—

Over the blue mountain-lines,

Over the forests of palms and
pines,

Over the harvest-lands golden,

Over the valleys that fold in

The gardens and vines—

He is not there !

All these are unworthy

Those footsteps to bear,

Before which, bowing down

I would fain quench the stars of my
crown

In the dark of the earthy

Where shall I seek *Him* ?

No reply ?

Hath language left thy lips, to
place

Its vocal in thine eye ?

Ador, *Ador* ! are we come

To a double portent that

Dumb matter grows articulate

And songful seraphs dumb ?

Ador, *Ador* !—

Ador

I constrain

The passion of my silence

None

Of those places gazed upon

Are dull enow to fit His pun.

Unto Him, whose forming word

¹ "His angels He charged with folly"—*Job*,
iv 18

Gave to Nature flower and
sward,
She hath given back again
For the myrtle, the thorn,—
For the sylvan calm, the human
scorn
Still, still, reluctant Seraph, gaze
beneath !
There is a city—
Zerah Temple and tower,
Palace and purple would droop like a
flower
(As a cloud at our breath),
If He neared in His state
The outermost gate
Ador Ah me, not so
In the state of a King, did the
victim go !
And THOU who hangedst mute of
speech
'Twixt heaven and earth, with
forehead yet
Stained by the bloody sweat,
God ! man ! Thou hast foregone Thy
throne in each !
Zerah Thine eyes behold Him ?
Ador Yea, below
Track the gazing of mine eyes,
Naming God within thine heart
That its weakness may depart
And the vision rise
Seest thou yet, beloved ?
Zerah I see
Beyond the city, crosses three,
And mortals three that hang
thereon,
'Ghast and silent to the sun
Round them blacken and welter and
press
Staring multitudes, whose father
Adam was—whose brows are
dark
With his Cain's corroded mark,—
Who curse with looks Nay—
let me rather
Turn unto the wilderness
Ador Turn not God dwells with
men
Zerah Above
He dwells with angels, and they love
Can these love ? With the living's
pride
They stare at those who die,—who
hang
In their sight and die They bear the
streak

Of the crosses' shadow, black not
wide,
To fall on their heads, as it swerves
aside
When the victims' pain,
Makes the crosses creak
Ador The cross—the cross !
Zerah A woman kneels
The mid cross under—
With white lips asunder
And motion on each—
They throb, as she feels,
With a spasm, not a speech,
And her lids, close as sleep,
Are less calm—for the eyes
Have made room there to
weep
Drop on drop—
Ador Weep ? Weep blood,
All women, all men !
He sweated it, He,
For your pale womanhood
And base manhood Agree
That these water-tears, then,
Are vain, mocking like laugh-
ter !
Weep blood !—Shall the flood
Of salt curses, whose foam is the
darkness, on roll
Forward, on, from the strand of the
storm-beaten years—
And back from the rocks of the
dreadful hereafter,
And up, in a coil, from the present's
wrath-spring,
Yea, down from the windows of
Heaven opening,—
Deep calling to deep as they meet on
His soul,—
And men weep only tears ?
Zerah Little drops in the lapse !
And yet, *Ador*, perhaps
It is all that they can
Tears ! the lovingest man
Has no better bestowed
Upon man
Ador Nor on God
Zerah Do all-givers need gifts ?
If the Giver said "Give," the first
motion would slay
Our Immortals, the echo would run
away
The same worlds which He made
Why, what angel uplifts
Such a music so clear,
It may seem in God's ear

Worth more than a woman's hoarse
weeping ? And thus,
Pity tender as tears, I above thee
would speak
Thou woman that weepest ! weep
unscorned of us !
I, the tearless and pure, am but
loving and weak
Ador Speak low, my brother,
low,—and not of love,
Or human or angelic ! Rather stand
Before the throne of that Supreme
above,
In whose infinitude the secrecies
Of thine own being lie hid,—and lift
thine hand
Exultant, saying, " Lord God, I am
wise ! "—
Than utter *here*, " I love "

Zerah And yet thine eyes
Do utter it They melt in tender
light,
The tears of Heaven
Ador Of Heaven Ah me !
Zerah *Ador* !
Ador Say on
Zerah The crucified are three
Beloved, they are unlike
Ador Unlike
Zerah For one
Is as a man who sinned and
still
Doth wear the wicked will,
The hard malign life-energy,
Tossed outward, in the parting soul's
disdain,
On brow and lip that cannot change
again
Ador And one—
Zerah Has also sinned
And yet (O marvel !) doth the
Spirit-wind
Blow white those waters ?—Death
upon his face
Is rather shine than shade,
A tender shine by looks beloved made
He seemeth dying in a quiet place,
And less by iron wounds in hands and
feet
Than heart-broke by new joy too
sudden and sweet
Ador And ONE !—
Zerah And ONE—
Ador Why dost thou pause ?
Zerah God ! God !
Spirit of my spirit ! Who movest

Through seraph veins in burning
deity,
To light the quenchless pulses !—
Ador But hast trod
The depths of love in Thy peculiar
nature,
And not in any Thou hast made and
lovest
In narrow seraph hearts !—
Zerah Above, Creator !
Within, Upholder !—
Ador And below, below,
The creature's and the upholder's
sacrifice !
Zerah Why do I pause ?—
Ador There is a silentness
That answers thee enow,—
That, like a brazen sound
Excluding others, doth ensheathe us
round,—
Hear it ! It is not from the visible
skies,
Though they are still,
Unconscious that their own dropped
dews express
The light of heaven on every earthly
hill
It is not from the hills, though calm
and bare
They since their first creation,
Through midnight cloud or morning's
glittering air
Or the deep deluge blindness, toward
the place
Whence thrilled the mystic word's
creative grace,
And whence again shall come
The word that uncreates,
Have lift their brows in voiceless
expectation
It is not from the places that en-
tomb
Man's dead—though common Silence
there dilates
Her soul to grand proportions,
worthily
To fill life's vacant room
Not there—not there !
Not yet within their chambers lieth
He,
A dead One in His living world ! His
south
And west winds blowing over earth
and sea,
And not a breath on that creating
Mouth !

But now,—a silence keeps
(Not death's, nor sleep's)
The lips whose whispered
word
Might roll the thunders round rever-
berated
Silent art Thou O my Lord,
Bowing down Thy stricken
head!

Fearest Thou, a groan of Thine
Would make the pulse of Thy creation
fail

As Thine own pulse ?—would rend
the veil

Of visible things, and let the flood
Of the Unseen Light, the essential
God,

Rush in to whelm the undivine ?—
Thy silence, to my thinking, is as
dread!

Zerah O silence!

Ador Doth it say to thee—the
NAME,

Slow-learning Seraph ?

Zerah I have learnt

Ador The flame

Perishes in thine eyes

Zerah He opened His—
And looked I cannot bear—

Ador Their agony ?

Zerah Their love God's depth
is in them From His brows

White, terrible in meekness, didst
thou see

The lifted eyes unclosed ?
He is God, seraph ! Look no more
on me,

O God ! I am not God

Ador The loving is
Sublimed within them by the sorrow-
ful

In Heaven we could sustain them

Zerah Heaven is dull,
Mine Ador, to man's earth The
light that burns

In fluent, reflux motion

Along the crystal ocean,—
The springing of the golden harps
between

The bowery wings, in fountains of
sweet sound—

The winding, wandering music that
returns

Upon itself, exultingly self-bound
In the great spheric round

Of everlasting praises—

The God-thoughts in our midst that
intervene,
Visibly flashing from the supreme
throne

Full in seraphic faces,
Till each astonishes the other, grown
More beautiful with worship and
delight !

My heaven ! my home of heaven ! my
infinite

Heaven-choirs ! what are ye to this
dust and death,

This cloud, this cold, these tears, this
failing breath,

Where God's immortal love now
issueth

In this MAN's woe ?

Ador His eyes are very deep yet
calm—

Zerah No more

On me, Jehovah-man—

Ador Calm-deep They show
A passion which is tranquil They
are seeing

No earth, no heaven no men, that
slay and curse,

No seraphs that adore

Their gaze is on the invisible, the
dread,

The things we cannot view or think
or speak

Because we are too happy, or too
weak—

The sea of ill, for which the universe
With all its piled space, can find no
shore,

With all its life, no living foot to
tread

But He, accomplished in Jehovah-
being,

Sustains the gaze adown,

Concerves the vast despair,

And feels the billowy griefs come up
to drown,

Nor fears, nor faints, nor fails, till all
be finished

Zerah Thus, do I find thee thus ?

My undiminished

And undiminishable God !—My God !—

The echoes are still tremulous along
The heavenly mountains, of the
latest song

Thy manifested glory swept abroad,
In rushing past our lips ! They echo
aye

“Creator, Thou art strong !—

Creator, Thou art blessed over all "
By what new utterance shall I now
recall

Unteaching the heaven-echoes ?

Dare I say,
"Creator, Thou art feeble than Thy
work !

Creator Thou art sadder than Thy
creature !

A worm, and not a man,—
Yea, now worm—but a curse ?"—

I dare not, so, mine heavenly phrase
reverse

Albert the piercing thorn and thistle-
fork

(Whose seed disordered ran
From Eve's hand trembling when the
curse did reach her)

Be garnered darklier in Thysoul' the
rod

That smites Thee never blossoming,
—and Thou,

Grief-bearer for Thy world, with
unkinged brow—

I leave to men their song of Ichabod !
I have an angel-tongue—I know but
praise

Ador Hereafter shall the blood-
bought captives raise

The passion-song of blood
Zerah And *us*, extend

Our holy vacant hands towards the
Throne

Crying "We have no music !"
Ador Rather, blend

Both musics into one !

The sanctities and sanctified above
Shall each to each, with lifted looks
serene,

Their shining faces lean
And mix the adoring breath

And breathe the full thanksgiving
Zerah But the love—

The love, mine *Ador* !

Ador Do we love not ?
Zerah Yea,

But not as man shall ! not with life
for death,

New-throbbing through the startled
being ! not

With strange astonished smiles, that
ever may

Gush passionate like tears and fill
their place !

Nor yet with speechless memories of
what

Earth's winters were, enverduring
the green

Of every heavenly palm
Whose windless, shadeless

calm
Moves only at the breath of the Un-
seen

Oh, not with this blood on us—and
this face,—

Still, haply, pale with sorrow that it
bore

In our behalf and tender evermore
With nature all our own, upon us

gazing !—
Nor yet with these forgiving hands

upraising
Their unreprouched wounds, alone to

bless !
Alas Creator ! shall we love Thee

less
Than mortals shall ?

Ador Amen ! so let it be
We love in our proportion—to the

bound
Thine infinite our finite set around,

And that is finitely—Thou, infinite
And worthy infinite love ! And our

delight
Is watching the dear love poured out

to Thee
From ever fuller chalice Blessed they,

Who love Thee more than we do !
blessed we,

Viewing that love which shall exceed
even this,

And winning in the sight, a double
bliss

For all so lost in love's supremacy !
The bliss is better ! only on the sad

Cold earth there are who say
It seemeth better to be great than

glad
The bliss is better ! Love Him more,

O man,
Than sinless seraphs can

Zerah Yea love Him more
Voices of the angelic multitude Yea,

more !
Ador The loving word

Is caught by those from whom we
stand apart

For Silence hath no deepness in her
heart

Where love's low name low breathed
would not be heard

By angels, clear as thunder

Angelic voices Love Him more !
Ador Sweet voices, swooning o'er
 The music which ye make !
 Albeit to love there were not
 ever given
 A mournful sound, when uttered
 out of heaven,
 That angel-sadness, ye would fit-
 ly take
 Of love be silent now ! we gaze
 adown
 Upon the Incarnate Love Who
 wears no crown
Zerah No crown ! the woe instead
 Is heavy on His head,
 Pressing inward on His
 brain,
 With a hot and clinging
 pain,
 Till all tears are prest away,
 And clear and calm His vision
 may
 Peruse the long abyss
 No rod, no sceptre is
 Holden in His fingers pale
 They close instead upon the
 nail,
 Concealing the sharp dole—
 Never stirring to put by
 The fair hair peaked with
 blood,
 Drooping forward from the
 rood
 Helplessly, heavily,
 On the cheek that waxeth
 colder,
 Whiter ever,—and the shoul-
 der
 Where the government was
 laid
 His glory made the Heavens
 afraid—
 Will He not unearth this cross
 from its hole ?
 His pity makes His piteous
 state
 Will He be uncompassionate
 Alone to His proper soul ?
 Yea, will He not lift up
 His lips from the bitter cup,
 His brows from the dreary
 weight,
 His hands from the clench-
 ing cross
 Crying, "My Father, give to
 Me

Again the joy I had with Thee,
 Or ere this earth was made for
 loss " ?—
 No stir—no sound !
 The love and woe being inter-
 wound
 He cleaveth to the woe,
 And putteth forth Heaven's
 strength below—
 To bear
Ador And that creates His an-
 guish now,
 Which made His glory there
Zerah Shall it indeed be so ?
 Awake, thou Earth ! behold !
 Thou, uttered forth of old
 In all thy life-emotion,
 In all thy vernal noises,
 In the rollings of thine ocean,
 Leaping founts, and rivers
 running,
 In thy woods' prophetic heav-
 ing
 Ere the rains a stroke have
 given,
 In thy wind's exultant voices
 When they feel the hills anear,
 In the firmamental sun-
 ning,
 And the tempest which re-
 joices
 Thy full heart with an awful
 cheer !
 Thou ! uttered forth of old
 And with all thy music rolled
 In a breath abroad
 By the breathing God !
 Awake ! He is here ! behold !—
 Even thou—
 beseems it good
 To thy vacant vision dim,
 That the deathly ruin should,
 For thy sake, encompass Him ?
 That the Master-word should
 lie
 A mere silence, while His own
 Processive harmony,
 The faintest echo of His
 lightest tone
 Is sweeping in a choral triumph by ?
 Awake ! emit a cry !
 And say, albeit used
 From Adam's ancient
 years
 To falls of acrid tears,
 To frequent sighs unloosed,

Caught back to press again
 On bosoms zoned with pain—
 To corse still and sullen
 The shine and music dulling
 With closed eyes and ears
 That nothing sweet can enter,
 Commoving thee no less
 With that forced quietness,
 Than earthquakes in thy
 centre—
 Thou hast not learnt to bear
 This new divine despair !
 These tears that sink into thee
 These dying eyes that view
 thee,
 This dropping blood from lifted
 rood,
 They darken and undo thee !
 Thou canst not, presently, sustain
 this corse !
 Cry, cry, thou hast not force !
 Cry, thou wouldst fainer keep
 Thy hopeless charnels deep—
 Thyself a general tomb—
 Where the first and the second
 Death
 Sit gazing face to face
 And mar each other's breath,
 While silent bones through
 all the place,
 'Neath sun and moon do
 faintly glisten,
 And seem to lie and listen
 For the tramp of the coming
 Doom
 Is it not meet
 That they who erst the Eden
 fruit did eat,
 Should champ the ashes ?
 That they who wrapt them
 in the thunder-cloud,
 Should wear it as a shroud,
 Perishing by its flashes ?
 That they who vexed the
 lion, should be rent ?
 Cry, cry—"I will sustain my
 punishment,
 The sin being mine ! but take
 away from me
 This visioned Dread—this
 Man—this Derty "
The Earth I have groaned—I
 have travailed—I am weary—
 I am blind with mine own grief, and
 cannot see,
 As clear-eyed angels can, His agony,

And what I see I also can sustain,
 Because His power protects me from
 His pain
 I have groaned—I have travailed—
 I am dreary,
 Harkening the thick sobs of my
 children's heart
 How can I say "Depart,"
 To that Atoner making calm and free ?
 Am I a God as He,
 To lay down peace and power as
 willingly ?
Ador He looked for some to pity
 There is none
 All pity is within Him, and not for
 Him
 His earth is iron under Him, and o'er
 Him
 His skies are brass
 His seraphs cry "Alas "
 With hallelujah voice that cannot
 weep
 And man, for whom the dreadful
 work is done—
Scornful voices from the Earth
 If verily thus be the Eternal's Son—
Ador Thou hearest !—man is
 grateful !
Zerah Can I hear,
 Nor darken into man, and cease for
 ever
 My seraph-smile to wear ?
 Was it for such,
 It pleased Him to overleap
 His glory with His love, and
 sever
 From the God-light and the
 throne
 And all angels bowing down
 For whom His every look did
 touch
 New notes of joy on the un-
 worn string
 Of an eternal worshipping !
 For such He left His
 heaven ?
 There though never bought
 by blood
 And tears, we gave Him
 gratitude !
 We loved Him there, though
 unforgiven !
 The light is riven
 Above, around,
 And downwardly in lurid fragments
 fung,

That catch the mountain-pinnacle
and stream,
With momentary gleam,
Then perish in the water and the
ground !
River and waterfall,
Forest and wilderness,
Mountain and city, are together
wrung
Into one shape, and that is shape-
lessness—
The darkness stands for all
Ador The pathos hath the day
undone
The death-look of His eyes
Hath overcome the sun,
And made it sicken in its narrow
skies—
Is it to death ? He dieth
Zerah Through the dark,
He still He only, is discernible—
The naked hands and feet, transfixed
stark,
The countenance of patient anguish
white,
Do make themselves a light
More dreadful than the glooms which
round them dwell,
And therein do they shine
Ador God ! Father-God !
Perpetual Radiance on the radiant
throne !
Uplift the lids of inward Deity,
Flashing abroad
Thy burning Infinite !
Light up this dark, where there is
nought to see,
Except the unimagined agony
Upon the sinless forehead of the
Son
Zerah God, tarry not ! Behold,
enow
Hath He wandered as a stranger,
Groan'd as a victim Thou,
Appear for Him, O Father !
Appear for Him, Avenger !
Appear for Him, just One and holy
One,
For He is holy and just !
At once the darkness and the evil,
rather
To the ragged jaws of hungry
chaos rake,
And hurl aback to ancient dust
These mortals that make blas-
phemies

With their made breath ! this
earth and skies
That only grow a little dim,
Seeing their curse on Him !
But Him, of all forsaken,
Of creature and of brother,
Never wilt Thou forsake !
Thy living and Thy loving cannot
slacken
Their firm essential hold upon each
other—
And well Thou dost remember
how His part
Was still to lie upon Thy breast,
and be
Partaker of the light that dwelt
in Thee
Ere sun or seraph shone,
And how while silence trembled
round the throne,
Thou countedst by the beatings
of His heart
The moments of Thine own etern-
ity !
Awaken,
O right Hand with the lightnings !
Again gather
His glory to Thy glory ! What
estranger—
What ill most strong in evil, can'
be thrust
Between the faithful Father and
the Son ?
Appear for Him, O Father !
Appear for Him, Avenger !
Appear for Him, just One and holy
One !
For He is holy and just
Ador Thy face, upturned toward
the throne, is dark—
Thou hast no answer, *Zerah*
Zerah No reply,
O unforsaking Father ?—
Ador Hark !
Instead of downward voice, a cry
Is uttered from beneath !
Zerah And by a sharper sound
than death,
Mine immortality is riven
The heavy darkness which doth tent
the sky,
Floats backward as by a sudden
wind—
But I see no light behind !
But I feel the farthest stars are all
Stricken and shaken,

And I know a shadow sad and broad,
Doth fall—doth fall
On our vacant thrones in heaven
Voice from the Cross MY GOD,
MY GOD,

WHY HAST THOU ME FORSAKEN ?
The Earth Ah me, ah me, ah me !
the dreadful why !

My sin is on Thee, sinless One !
Thou art

God-orphaned, for my burden on
Thy head

Dark sin ! white innocence ! endurance dread !

Be still, within your shrouds, my
buried dead—

Nor work with this quick horror
round mine heart !

Zerah He hath forsaken Him !
—I perish—

Ador Hold
Upon His name ! We perish not
Of old

His will—
Zerah I seek His will Seek,
Seraphim !

My God, my God ! where is it ? Doth
that curse,

Reverberate, spare us, seraph or
universe ?

He hath forsaken Him

Ador He cannot fail

Angel voices We faint—we droop
Our love doth tremble like
fear—

*Voices of Fallen Angels, from the
earth* Do we prevail ?

Or are we lost ?—Hath not the ill
we did

Been heretofore our good ?

Is it not ill, that One, all sinless,
should

Hang heavy with all curses, on a
cross ?

Nathless, *that cry* !—with huddled
faces hid

Within the empty graves which men
did scoop

To hold more damned dead, we
shudder through

What shall exalt us or undo,—

Our triumph, or—our loss

Voice from the Cross IT IS
FINISHED

Zerah Hark, again !
Like a victor, speaks the Slain—

Angel Voices Finished be the
trembling vain !

Ador Upward, like a well-loved
Son,

Looketh He, the orphaned One—

Angel Voices Finished is the
mystic pain !

Voices of Fallen Angels His
deathly forehead at the word,

Gleameth like a seraph sword

Angel Voices Finished is the
demon reign !

Ador His breath, as living God,
createth—

His breath, as dying man,
completeth

Angel Voices Finished work His
hands sustain !

The Earth In mine ancient sepul-
chres

Where my kings and prophets
freeze,

Adam dead four thousand
years,

Unwakened by the universe's
Everlasting moan

Aye his ghastly silence, mock-
ing—

Unwakened by his children's
knocking

'Gainst his old sepulchral
stone,

"Adam, Adam ! all this curse
is

Thine, and on us yet !"—

Unwakened by the ceaseless
tears

Wherewith they made his
cerement wet—

"Adam, must thy curse re-
main ?"—

Starts with sudden life, and hears
Through the slow dripping of the
caverned eaves—

Angel Voices Finished is his bane !
Voice from the Cross FATHER !

MY SPIRIT TO THINE HANDS IS
GIVEN !

Ador Hear the wailing winds
that be

By wings of unclean spirits
made !

They, in that last look,
surveyed

The love they lost in losing
heaven,

And passionately flee,
 With a desolate cry that
 cleaves
 The natural storms—though
they are lifting
 God's strong cedar-roots
 like leaves,
 And the earthquake and
 the thunder,
 Neither keeping neither
 under,
 Roar and hurtle through
 the glooms,—
 And a few pale stars are
 drifting
 Past the Dark, to disappear,
 What time from the split-
 ting tombs
 Gleamingly the Dead arise,
 Viewing, with their death-
 calmed eyes
 The elemental strategies,
 To witness, Victory is the
 Lord's !—
 Hear the wail o' the spirits !
 hear
Zerah I hear alone the memory
 of His words

THE EPILOGUE

I

My song is done !
 My voice that long hath faltered,
 shall be still
 The mystic darkness drops from
 Calvary's hill,
 Into the common light of this day's
 sun

II

I see no more Thy cross, O holy Slain !
 I hear no more the horror and the coil
 Of the great world's turmoil
 Feeling Thy countenance *too still*,—
 nor yell
 Of demons sweeping past it to their
 prison
 The skies that turned to darkness
 with Thy pain,
 Make now a summer's day,—
 And on my changed ear, that Sab-
 bath bell
 Records how CHRIST IS RISEN

III

And I—ah ! what am I

To counterfeit, with faculty earth-
 darkened,
 Seraphic brows of light
 And seraph language never used nor
 harkened ?
 Ah me ! what word that seraphs say,
 could come
 From mouth so used to sighs—so
 soon to lie
 Sighless, because then breathless, in
 the tomb ?

IV

Bright ministers of God and grace !
 —of grace
 Because of God !—whether ye bow
 adown
 In your own heaven, before the
 living face
 Of Him who died, and deathless wears
 the crown—
 Or whether at this hour, ye haply are
 Anear, around me, hiding in the night
 Of this permitted ignorance, your
 light,
 This feebleness to spare,—
 Forgive me, that mine earthly heart
 should dare
 Shape images of unincarnate spirits,
 And lay upon their burning lips a
 thought
 Cold with the weeping which mine
 earth inherits !
 And though ye find in such hoarse
 music ye find
 To copy yours, a cadence all the while
 Of sin and sorrow—only pitying
 smile !—
 Ye know to pity, well

V

I too may haply smile another day,
 At the far recollection of this lay,
 When God may call me in your midst
 to dwell,
 To hear your most sweet music's
 miracle
 And see your wondrous faces May
 it be !
 For His remembered sake, the Slain
 on rood,
 Who rolled His earthly garment red
 in blood,
 (Treading the wine-press) that the
 weak, like me,
 Before His heavenly throne should
 walk in white

OTHER POEMS

[1838]

THE POET'S VOW

—O be wiser thou,
Instructed that true knowledge leads to love
—Wordsworth

PART THE FIRST

SHOWING WHEREFORE THE VOW
WAS MADE

I

EVE is a twofold mystery—
The stillness Earth doth keep —
The motion wherewith human hearts
Do each to either leap,
As if all souls between the poles,
Felt "Parting comes in sleep"

II

The rowers lift their oars to view
Each other in the sea,
The landsmen watch the rocking boats,
In a pleasant company,
While up the hill go gladlier still
Dear friends by two and three

III

The peasant's wife hath looked with-
out
Her cottage door and smiled,
For there the peasant drops his spade
To clasp his youngest child
Which hath no speech, but its hands
can reach
And stroke his forehead mild

IV

A poet sate that eventide
Within his hall alone,
As silent as its ancient lords
In the coffined place of stone,
When the bat hath shrunk from the
praying monk—
And the praying monk is gone

V

Nor wore the dead a stiller face
Beneath the cerement's roll
His lips refusing out in words
Their mystic thoughts to dole,
His stedfast eye burnt inwardly,
As burning out his sou'

VI

You would not think that brow
could e'er
Ungentle moods express
Yet seemed it, in this troubled world,
Too calm for gentleness
When the very star, that shines from
far,
Shines trembling, ne'ertheless

VII

It lacked—all need—the softening
light
Which other brows supply
We should conjoin the scathed
trunks
Of our humanity,
That each leafless spray entwining
may
Look softer 'gainst the sky

VIII

None gazed within the poet's face—
The poet gazed in none
He threw a lonely shadow straight
Before the moon and sun,
Affronting nature's heaven-dwelling
creatures,
With wrong to nature done

IX

Because this poet daringly,
The nature at his heart,
And that quick tune along his veins
He could not change by art
Had vowed his blood of brotherhood
To a stagnant place apart

X

He did not vow in fear, or wrath,
Or grief's fantastic whim,—
But, weights and shows of sensual
things
Too closely crossing him,
On his soul's eyelid, the pressure slid
And made its vision dim

XI

And darkening in the dark he strove
'Twixt earth and sea and sky,
To lose in shadow wave and cloud
His brother's haunting cry
The winds were welcome as they
swept
God's five-day work he would accept,
But let the rest go by

XII

He cried—"O touching, patient Earth,
That weepst in thy glee!
Whom God created very good,
And very mournful, we!
Thy voice of moan doth reach His
throne,
As Abel's rose from thee

XIII

"Poor crystal sky, with stars astray!
Mad winds, that howling go
From east to west! perplexèd seas,
That stagger from their blow!
O motion wild! O wave defiled!
Our curse hath made you so

XIV

"We! and our curse! Do I partake
The desiccating sin?
Have I the apple at my lips?
The money-lust within?
Do I human stand with the wounding
hand
To the blasting heart akin?

XV

"Thou solemn pathos of all things,
For solemn joy designed!
Behold, submissive to your cause
An holy wrath I find,
And, for your sake, the bondage break,
That knits me to my kind

XVI

"Hear me forswear man's sympathies,
His pleasant 'yea' and 'no'—
His riot on the piteous earth
Whereon his thistles grow!
His charging love—with stars above!
His pride—with graves below!

XVII

"Hear me forswear his roof by night,
His bread and salt by day,
His talkings at the wood-fire hearth,
His greetings by the way,
His answering looks, his systemed
books,
All man, for aye and aye

XVIII

"That so my purged, once human
heart,
From all the human rent
May gather strength to pledge and
drink
Your wine of wonderment,
While you pardon me, all blessingly,
The woe mine Adam sent

XIX

"And I shall feel your unseen looks
Innumerable, constant, deep,
And soft as haunted Adam once,
Though sadder, round me creep,—
As slumbering men have mystic ken
Of watchers on their sleep

XX

"And ever, when I lift my brow
At evening to the sun,
No voice of woman or of child
Recording 'Day is done,'
Your silences shall a love express,
More deep than such an one!"

PART THE SECOND

SHOWING TO WHOM THE VOW WAS
DECLARED

I

THE poet's vow was only sworn—
The poet's vow was told
He shared among his crowding friends
The silver and the gold,—
They clasping bland his gift,—his
hand
In a somewhat slacken hold

II

They wended forth, the crowding
friends,
With farewells smooth and kind—
They wended forth, the solaced
friends
And left but twain behind
One loved him true as brothers do,
And one was Rosalind

III

He said—"My friends have wended
forth
With farewells smooth and kind
Mine oldest friend, my plighted bride,
Ye need not stay behind
Friend wed my fair bride for my
sake,—
And let my lands ancestral make
A dower for Rosalind

IV

"And when beside your wassail board
Ye bless your social lot
I charge you that the giver be
In all his gifts 'forgot'
Or alone of all his words recall
The last — Lament me not!"

v

She looked upon him silently,
 With her large, doubting eyes,
 Like a child that never knew but love,
 Whom words of wrath surprise,
 Till the rose did break from either
 cheek,
 And the sudden tears did rise

vi

She looked upon him mournfully,
 While her large eyes were grown
 Yet larger with the steady tears,
 Till, all his purpose known,
 She turned slow, as she would
 go—
 The tears were shaken down —

vii

She turned slow, as she would go,
 Then quickly turned again
 And gazing in his face to seek
 Some little touch of pain—
 "I thought," she said,—but shook
 her head —
 She tried that speech in vain

viii

"I thought—but I am half a child
 And very sage art thou—
 The teachings of the heaven and earth
 Should keep us soft and low
 They have drawn *my* tears, in early
 years,
 Or ere I wept—as now

ix

"But now that in thy face I read
 Their cruel homily,
 Before their beauty I would fain
 Untouched, unsoftened be,—
 If I indeed could look on even
 The senseless, loveless earth and
 heaven
 As *thou* canst look on *me*

x

"And couldst thou as coldly view
 Thy childhood's far abode,
 Where little feet kept time with thine
 Along the dewy sod?
 And thy mother's look from holy book
 Rose, like a thought of God?

xi

"O brother,—called so, ere her last
 Betrothing words were said!
 O fellow-watcher in her room,
 With hushed voice and tread!

Rememberest thou how, hand in
 hand,
 O friend, O lover, we did stand,
 And knew that she was dead?

xii

"I will not live Sir Roland's bride,—
 That dower I will not hold!
 I tread below my feet that go,
 These parchments bought and sold
 The tears I weep are mine to keep
 And worthier than thy gold"

xiii

The poet and Sir Roland stood
 Alone, each turned to each,
 Till Roland brake the silence left
 By that soft-throbbing speech—
 "Poor heart!" he cried, "it vainly
 tried
 The distant heart to reach!"

xiv

"And thou, O distant, sinful heart,
 That climbest up so high,
 To wrap and blind thee with the
 snows
 That cause to dream and die—
 What blessing can, from lips of man,
 Approach thee with his sigh?"

xv

"Ay! what, from earth—create for
 man,
 And moaning in his moan?
 Ay! what from stars—revealed to
 man,
 And man-named, one by one?
 Ay, more! what blessing can be
 given,
 Where the Spirits seven do show in
 Heaven
 A MAN upon the throne?"

xvi

"A man on earth HE wandered once,
 All meek and undefiled
 And those who loved Him, said 'He
 wept'—
 None ever said He smiled,
 Yet there might have been a smile
 unseen,
 When He bowed His blessed face, I
 ween,
 To bless that happy child

xvii

"And now HE pleadeth up in Heaven
 For our humanities,

Till the ruddy light on seraphs' wings
In pale emotion dies
They can better bear His Godhead's
glare,
Than the pathos of His eyes

XVIII

"I will go pray our God to-day
To teach thee how to scan
His work divine, for human use
Since earth on axle ran!
To teach thee to discern as plain
His grief divine—the blood-drop's
stain

He left there, MAN for man

XIX

"So, for the blood's sake, shed by
Him,
Whom angels God declare,
Tears, like it, moist and warm with
love,

Thy reverent eyes shall wear,
To see i' the face of Adam's race
The nature God doth share"

XX

"I heard," the poet said, "thy voice
As dimly as thy breath!
The sound was like the noise of life
To one anear his death,—
Or of waves that fail to stir the pale
Sere leaf they roll beneath

XXI

"And still between the sound and me
White creatures like a mist
Did interfloat confusedly,—
Mysterious shapes unwist!
Across my heart and across my brow
I felt them droop like wreaths of snow,
To still the pulse they kist

XXII

"The castle and its lands are thine—
The poor's—it shall be done
Go, *man*, to love! I go to live
In Courland hall, alone
The bats along the ceilings cling,—
The lizards in the floors do run,—
And storms and years have worn and
reft

The stain by human builders left
In working at the stone!"

PART THE THIRD

SHOWING HOW THE VOW WAS KEPT

I

He dwelt alone, and, sun and moon,
Were witness that he made

Rejection of his humanness
Until they seemed to fade
His face did so, for he did grow
Of his own soul afraid

II

The self-poised God may dwell a one
With inward glorying,
But God's chief angel waiteth for
A brother's voice, to sing,—
And a lonely creature of sinful nature—
It is an awful thing

III

An awful thing that feared itself
While many years did roll,—
A lonely man, a feeble man,—
A part beneath the whole—
He bore by day, he bore by night
That pressure of God's infinite
Upon his finite soul

IV

The poet at his lattice sate,
And downwardly looked he
Three Christians wended by to
prayers
With mute ones in their ee
Each turned above a face of love,
And called him to the far chapelle
With voice more tuneful than its bell—
But still they wended three

V

There journeyed by a bridal pomp,
A bridegroom and his dame
She speaketh low for happiness,
She blusheth red for shame,—
But never a tone of benison
From out the lattice came

VI

A little child with inward song,
No louder noise to dare,
Stood near the wall to see at play
The lizards green and rare—
Unblessed the while for his childish
smile
Which cometh unaware

PART THE FOURTH

SHOWING HOW ROSALIND FARED BY
THE KEEPING OF THE VOW

I

In death-sheets leth Rosalind,
As white and still as they,
And the old nurse that watched her
bed,
Rose up with "Well-a-day!"

And oped the casement to let in
The sun, and that sweet doubtful din
Which droppeth from the grass and
bough

Sans wind and bird—none knoweth
how—

To cheer her as she lay

II

The old nurse started when she saw
Her sudden look of woe!
But the quick wan tremblings round
her mouth

In a meek smile did go,
And calm she said, "When I am dead,
Dear nurse, it shall be so

III

"Till then, shut out those sights and
sounds,

And pray God pardon me
That I without this pain, no more
His blessed works can see!
And lean beside me, loving nurse,
That thou mayst hear, ere I am worse,
What thy last love breathe "

IV

The loving nurse leant over her,
As white she lay beneath,
The old eyes searching, dim with life,
The young ones dim with death,
To read their book if sound forsook
The trying, trembling breath —

V

"When all this feeble breath is done,
And I on bier am laid,
My tresses smoothed for never a feast,
My body in shroud arrayed,
Uplift each palm in a saintly calm,
As if that still I prayed

VI

"And heap beneath mine head the
flowers
You stoop so low to pull,—
The little white flowers from the wood,
Which grow there in the cool,
Which he and I, in childhood's games,
Went plucking, knowing not their
names

And filled thine apron full

VII

"Weep not! I weep not Death is
strong,
The eyes of Death are dry!

B P

But lay this scroll upon my breast
When hushed its heavings lie,
And wait awhile for the corpse's smile
Which shineth presently

VIII

"And when it shineth, straightway
call

Thy youngest children dear,
And bid them gently carry me
All barefaced on the bier—
But bid them pass my kirkyard grass
That waveth long anear

IX

"And up the bank where I used to sit
And dream what life would be,
Along the brook, with its sunny look
Akin to living glee,—
O'er the windy hill, through the forest
still,

Let them gently carry me

X

"And through the piney forest still,
And down the open moorland—
Round where the sea beats mistily
And blindly on the foreland—
And let them chant that hymn I
know,

Bearing me soft, bearing me slow,
To the ancient hall of Courland

XI

"And when withal they near the hall,
In silence let them lay
My bier before the bolted door,
And leave it for a day
For I have vowed, though I am proud,
To go there as a guest in shroud,
And not be turned away "

XII

The old nurse looked within her eyes,
Whose mutual look was gone,
The old nurse stooped upon her
mouth,

Whose answering voice was done,
And naught she heard, till a little
bird

Upon the casement's woodbine
swinging,

Broke out into a loud sweet singing
For joy o' the summer sun

"Alack! alack!"—she watched no
more—

With head on knee she wailed
sore

H

And the little bird sang o'er and o'er
For joy o' the summer sun

PART THE FIFTH

SHOWING HOW THE VOW WAS BROKEN

I

The poet oped his bolted door,
The midnight sky to view
A spirit-feel was in the air
Which seemed to touch his spirit bare

Whenever his breath he drew,
And the stars a liquid softness had,
As alone their holiness forbade
Their falling with the dew

II

They shine upon the steadfast hills,
Upon the swinging tide,
Upon the narrow track of beach,
And the murmuring pebbles pied
They shine on every lovely place—
They shine upon the corpse's face,
As *it* were fair beside

III

It lay before him, humanlike,
Yet so unlike a thing!
More awful in its shrouded pomp
Than any crownèd king
All calm and cold, as it did hold
Some secret, glorying

IV

A heavier weight than of its clay
Clung to his heart and knee
As if those folded palms could strike,
He staggered groaningly,
And then o'erhung, without a groan,
The meek close mouth that smiled alone,
Whose speech the scroll must be

THE WORDS OF ROSALIND'S SCROLL

"I LEFT thee last, a child at heart,
A woman scarce in years
I come to thee, a solemn corpse,
Which nether feels nor fears
I have no breath to use in sighs
They laid the death-weights on mine eyes,
To seal them safe from tears

Look on me with thine own calm look—
I meet it calm as thou!

Nolook of thine can change *this* smile,
Or break thy sinful vow
I tell thee that my poor scorned heart
Is of thine earth . . . thine earth—
a part—

It cannot love thee now

"But out, alas! these words are writ
By a living, loving one,
Adown whose cheeks, the proofs of life,

The warm, quick tears do run
Ah, let the unloving corpse controul
Thy scorn back from the loving soul,
Whose place of rest is won

"I have prayed for thee with bitter sobs,

When passion's course was free!
I have prayed for thee with silent lips,

In the anguish none could see!
They whispered oft, 'She sleepeth soft'—

But I only prayed for thee

"Go to! I pray for thee no more—
The corpse's tongue is still

Its told fingers point to heaven,
But point there stiff and chill
No farther wrong, no farther woe
Hath licence from the sin below
Its tranquil heart to thrill

"I charge thee, by the living's prayer,
And the dead's silentness,
To wring from out thy soul a cry
Which God shall hear and bless!
Lest Heaven's own palm droop in my hand,

And pale among the saints I stand,
A saint companionless"

V

Bow lower down before the throne,
Triumphant Rosalind!
He boweth on thy corpse his face,
And weepeth as the blind
'Twas a dread sight to see them so—
For the senseless corpse rocked to and fro,
With the wail of his living mind

VI

But dreadier sight, could such be seen,
His inward mind did he,
Whose long-subjected humanness

Gave out its lion cry,
And fiercely rent its tenement
In a mortal agony

VII

I tell you, friends, had you heard his
wail,
'Twould haunt you in court and
mart,
And in merry feast, until you set
Your cup down to depart—
That weeping wild of a reckless child
From a proud man's broken heart !

VIII

O broken heart ! O broken vow,
That wore so proud a feature !
God, grasping as a thunderbolt
The man's rejected nature,
Smote him therewith—' the presence
high
Of his so worshipped earth and sky
That looked on all indifferently—
A wailing human creature

IX

A human creature found too weak
To bear his human pain—
(May Heaven's dear grace have spok'n
peace
To his dying heart and brain !)
For when they came at dawn of day
To lift the lady's corpse away,
Her bier was holding twain

X

They dug beneath the kirkyard grass,
For both one dwelling deep
And, after years had mossed the
stone,
Sir Roland brought his little son
To watch the funeral heap
And, when the happy boy would
rather
Turn upward his blithe eyes to see
The wood-doves nodding from the
tree—
"Nay, boy, look downward," said
his father
"Upon this human dust asleep
And hold it in thy constant ken,
That God's own unity compresses
(One into one) the human many,
And that His everlastingness is
The bond which is not loosed by
any
That thou and I this law must keep,

If not in love in sorrow then !
Though smiling not like other men,
Still, like them, we must weep "

THE ROMAUNT OF MARGRET

Can my affections find out nothing best,
But still and still remove ?—
Quarles

I

I PLANT a tree whose leaf
The yew-tree leaf will suit
But when its shade is o'er you laid,
Turn round and pluck the fruit !
Now reach my harp from off the wall
Where shines the sun aslant
The sun may shine and we be cold—
O hearken, loving hearts and bold,
Unto my wild romaunt,
Margret, Margret

II

Sitteth the fair ladye
Close to the river side,
Which runneth on with a merry tone,
Her merry thoughts to guide
It runneth through the trees,
It runneth by the hill,
Nathless the lady's thoughts have
found
A way more pleasant still
Margret, Margret.

III

The night is in her hair,
And giveth shade to shade,
And the pale moonlight on her fore-
head white
Like a spirit's hand is laid.
Her lips part with a smile,
Instead of speakings done—
I ween, she thinketh of a voice,
Albert uttering none
Margret, Margret.

IV

All little birds do sit
With heads beneath their wings .
Nature doth seem in a mystic dream,
Absorbed from her living things.
That dream by that ladye
Is certes unpartook,
For she looketh to the high cold stars
With a tender human look
Margret, Margret.

V

The lady's shadow lies
Upon the running river .

It lieth no less in its quietness,
 For that which resteth never
 Most like a trusting heart
 Upon a passing faith,—
 On as, upon the course of life,
 The steadfast doom of death
 Margret, Margret

VI

The lady doth not move,
 The lady doth not dream,—
 Yet she seeth her shade no longer laid
 In rest upon the stream !
 It shaketh without wind,
 It parteth from the tide,
 It standeth upright in the cleft moon-
 light—
 It sitteth at her side
 Margret, Margret

VII

Look in its face, ladye,
 And keep thee from thy swoond !
 With a spirit bold, thy pulses hold,
 And hear its voice's sound !
 For so will sound thy voice,
 When thy face is to the wall !
 And such will be thy face, ladye,
 When the maidens work thy
 pall—
 Margret, Margret

VIII

"Am I not like to thee?"—
 The voice was calm and low—
 And between each word you might
 have heard
 The silent forests grow
 "*The like may sway the like*"
 By which mysterious law,
 Mine eyes from thine and my lips
 from thine
 The light and breath may draw,
 Margret, Margret

IX

"My lips do need thy breath,
 My lips do need thy smile,
 And my pale deep eyne, that light in
 thine
 Which met the stars erewhile
 Yet go with light and life,
 If that thou lovest one
 In all the earth, who loveth thee
 As truly as the sun,
 Margret, Margret"

X

Her cheek had waxed white,
 Like cloud at fall of snow,
 Then like to one at set of sun,
 It waxed red also,
 For love's name maketh bold,
 As if the loved were near !
 And then she sighed the deep long sigh
 Which cometh after fear
 Margret, Margret

XI

"Now, sooth, I fear thee not—
 Shall never fear thee now!"
 (And a noble sight was the sudden
 light
 Which lit her lifted brow)
 "Can earth be dry of streams,
 Or hearts, of love?" she said—
 "Who doubteth love, can know not
 love
 He is already dead"
 Margret, Margret

XII

"I have" and here her lips
 Some word in pause did keep,
 And gave the while a quiet smile,
 As if they paused in sleep,—
 "I have a brother dear,
 A knight of knightly fame"
 I brodered him a knightly scarf
 With letters of my name
 Margret, Margret

XIII

"I fed his grey gos hawk
 I kissed his fierce bloodhound,
 I sate at home when he might come
 And caught his horn's far sound
 I sang him hunter's songs,
 I poured him the red wine—
 He looked across the cup, and said,
 '*I love thee, sister mine*'"
 Margret, Margret.

XIV

It trembled on the grass,
 With a low, shadowy laughter
 The sounding river which rolled for
 ever,
 Stood dumb and stagnant after
 "Brave knight thy brother is"
 But better loveth he
 Thy chaliced wine than thy chanted
 song,
 And better both, than thee,
 Margret, Margret"

xv

The lady did not heed
 The river's silence, while
 Her own thoughts still ran at their
 will,
 And calm was still her smile
 "My little sister wears
 The look our mother wore
 I smooth her locks with a golden
 comb—
 I bless her evermore
 Margret, Margret

xvi

"I gave her my first bird,
 When first my voice it knew,
 I made her share my posies rare,
 And told her where they grew
 I taught her God's dear name
 With prayer and praise, to tell—
 She looked from heaven into my face,
 And said, 'I love thee well' "
 Margret, Margret

xvii

It trembled on the grass,
 With a low, shadowy laughter
 You could see each bird as it woke
 and stared
 -Through the shrivelled foliage after
 "Fair child thy sister is!
 But better loveth she
 Thy golden comb than thy gathered
 flowers—
 And better both, than thee,
 Margret, Margret "

xviii

The lady did not heed
 The withering on the bough
 Still calm her smile, albeit the while
 A little pale her brow
 "I have a father old,
 The lord of ancient halls
 An hundred friends are in his court,
 Yet only me he calls
 Margret, Margret

xix

"An hundred knights are in his
 court,
 Yet read I by his knee,
 And when forth they go to the tour-
 ney show,
 I rise not up to see
 'Tis a weary book to read—
 My tryst's at set of sun—

But loving and dear beneath the stars
 Is his blessing when I've done "
 Margret, Margret

xx

It trembled on the grass,
 With a low, shadowy laughter
 And moon and star though bright and
 far
 Did shrink and darken after
 "High lord thy father is!
 But better loveth he
 His ancient halls than his hundred
 friends,—
 His ancient halls, than thee,
 Margret, Margret "

xxi

The lady did not heed
 That the far stars did fail
 Still calm her smile, albeit the while.
 Nay, but she is not pale!
 "I have a more than friend
 Across the mountains dim
 No other's voice is soft to me,
 Unless it nameth *him* "
 Margret, Margret

xxii

"Though louder beats mine heart,
 I know his tread again—
 And his far plume aye, unless turned
 away,
 For the tears do blind me then
 We brake no gold, a sign
 Of stronger faith to be,—
 But I wear his last look in my soul,
 Which said, 'I love but thee !' "
 Margret, Margret

xxiii

It trembled on the grass,
 With a low, shadowy laughter
 And the wind did toll, as a passing soul
 Were sped by church-bell, after
 And shadows, 'stead of light,
 Fell from the stars above,
 In flakes of darkness on her face
 Still bright with trusting love
 Margret, Margret

xxiv

"He *loved* but only thee !
 That love is transient too
 The wild hawk's bill doth dabble still
 I' the mouth that vowed thee true,
 Will he open his dull eyes,
 When tears fall on his brow ?

Behold, the death-worm to his heart
Is a nearer thing than *thou*,
Margret, Margret "

xxv

Her face was on the ground—
None saw the agony !
But the men at sea did that night agree
They heard a drowning cry
And when the morning brake,
Fast rolled the river's tide,
With the green trees waving overhead,
And a white corse laid beside
Margret, Margret

xxvi

A knight's bloodhound and he
The funeral watch did keep
With a thought o' the chase he
stroked its face
As it howled to see him weep
A fair child kissed the dead,
But shrank before the cold
And alone yet proudly in his hall
Did stand a baron old
Margret, Margret

xxvii

Hang up my harp again—
I have no voice for song
Not song but wail, and mourners pale
Not bards, to love belong
O failing human love !
O light, by darkness known !
O false, the while thou treadest earth !
O deaf, beneath the stone !
Margret, Margret

ISOBEL'S CHILD

—so find we profit,
By losing of our prayers
—*Shakespeare*

I

To rest the weary nurse has gone,
An eight-day watch had watchèd
she,
Still rocking beneath sun and moon
The baby on her knee,
Till Isobel its mother said
"The fever waneth—wend to bed—
For now the watch comes round to
me "

II

Then wearily the nurse did throw
Her pallet in the darkest place
Of that sick room, and slept, and
dreamed,

For, as the gusty wind did blow
The night-lamp's flare across her
face,
She saw, or seemed to see, but
dreamed,
That the poplars tall on the opposite
hill,
The seven tall poplars on the hull,
Did clasp the setting sun until
His rays dropped from him, pined
and still

As blossoms in frost !
Till he waned and paled, so weirdly
crossed,
To the colour of moonlight which
doth pass
Over the dank ridged churchyard
grass
The poplars held the sun, and he
The eyes of the nurse, that they should
not see,
Not for a moment, the babe on her
knee,
Though she shuddered to feel that it
grew to be
Too chill, and lay too heavily

III

She only dreamed for all the while
'Twas Lady Isobel that kept
The little baby,—and it slept
Fast, warm, as if its mother's smile,
Laden with love's dewy weight,
And red as a rose of Harpocrate,
Dropt upon its eyelids, pressed
Lashes to cheek in a sealed rest

IV

And more and more smiled Isobel
To see the baby sleep so well—
She knew not that she smiled
Against the lattice, dull and wild,
Drive the heavy droning drops,
Drop by drop, the sound being
one—
As momentarily time's segments fall
On the ear of God, Who hears
through all
Eternity's unbroken monotone.
And more and more smiled Isobel
To see the baby sleep so well—
She knew not that she smiled.
The wind in intermission stops
Down in the beechen forest,
Then cries aloud
As one at the sorest,
Self-stung, self-driven,

And rises up to its very tops,
 Stiffening erect the branches
 bowed,—
 Dilating with a tempest-soul
 The trees that with their dark
 hands break
 Through their own outline and heavily
 roll
 Shadows as massive as clouds in
 heaven,
 Across the castle lake
 And more and more smiled Isobel
 To see the baby sleep so well,
 She knew not that she smiled—
 She knew not that the storm was
 wild
 Through the uproar drear she could
 not hear
 The castle clock which struck anear—
 She heard the low, light breathing of
 her child

V

O sight for wondering look!
 While the external nature broke
 Into such abandonment,—
 While the very mist heart-rent
 By the lightning, seemed to eddy
 Against nature, with a din—
 A sense of silence and of steady
 Natural calm appeared to come
 From things without and enter in
 The human creature's room

VI

So motionless she sate,
 The babe asleep upon her knees,
 You might have dreamed their
 souls had gone
 Away to things inanimate,
 In such to live in such to moan,
 And that their bodies had ta'en back,
 In mystic change all silences
 That cross the sky in cloudy rack,
 Or dwell beneath the reedy ground
 In waters safe from their own sound
 Only she wore
 The deepening smile I named before,
 And *that* a deepening love expressed—
 And who at once can love and rest?

VII

In sooth the smile that then was
 keeping
 Watch upon the baby sleeping,
 Floated with its tender light

Downward, from the drooping eyes,
 Upward, from the lips apart,
 Over cheeks which had grown white
 With an eight-day weeping
 All smiles come in such a wise,
 Where tears shall fall, or have of old—
 Like northern lights that fill the
 heart
 Of heaven in sign of cold

VIII

Motionless she sate
 Her hair had fallen by its weight
 On each side of her smile, and lay
 Very blackly on the arm
 Where the baby nestled warm,—
 Pale as baby carved in stone
 Seen by glimpses of the moon
 Up a dark cathedral aisle!
 But, through the storm, no moonbeam
 fell

Upon the child of Isobel—
 Perhaps you saw it by the ray
 Alone of her still smile,

IX

A solemn thing it is to me
 To look upon a babe that sleeps—
 Wearing in its spirit-deeps
 The undeveloped mystery
 Of our Adam's taint and woe,
 Which, when they revealed be,
 Will not let it slumber so!
 Lying new in life beneath
 The shadow of the coming death,
 With that soft, low, quiet breath,
 As if it felt the sun!
 Knowing all things by their
 blooms,
 Not their roots, yea,—sun and sky,
 Only by the warmth that comes
 Out of each,—earth, only by
 The pleasant hues that o'er it run,—
 And human love, by drops of sweet
 White nourishment still hanging
 round
 The little mouth so slumber bound
 All which broken sentency
 And conclusion incomplete,
 Will gather and unite and climb
 To an immortality
 Good or evil each sublime,
 Through life and death to life again!
 O little lids, now folded fast,
 Must ye learn to drop at last
 Our large and burning tears?

O warm quick body, must thou lie,
 When the time comes round to die,
 Still, from all the whirl of years,
 Bare of all the joy and pain ?—
 O small frail being, wilt thou stand
 At God's right hand,—
 Lifting up those sleeping eyes,
 Dilated by sublimest destinies,
 To an endless waking ? Thrones and
 seraphim,
 Through the long ranks of their
 solemnities,
 Sunning thee with calm looks of
 Heaven's surprise—
Thy look alone on *Him* ?—
 Or else, self-willed to tread the God
 less place,
 (God keep thy will !) feel thine own
 energies,
 Cold, strong, objectless, like a dead
 man's clasp,
 The sleepless deathless life within
 thee, grasp,—
 While myriad faces, like one change-
 less face,
 With woe *not love's*, shall glass thee
 everywhere,
 And overcome thee with thine own
 despair ?

x

More soft, less solemn images
 Drifted o'er the lady's heart,
 Silently as snow
 She had seen eight days depart
 Hour by hour, on bended knees,
 With pale-wrung hands and prayings
 low
 And broken—through which came
 the sound
 Of tears that fell against the ground,
 Making sad stops —“ Dear Lord,
 dear Lord ! ”
 She still had prayed—(the heavenly
 word,
 Broken by an earthly sigh)—
 “ Thou, Who didst not erst deny
 The mother-joy to Mary mild,
 Blessed in the Blessed Child,
 Which hearkened in meek babyhood
 Her cradle-hymn, albeit used
 To all that music interfused
 In breasts of angels high and good !
 Oh, take not, Lord, my babe away—
 Oh, take not to Thy songful heaven,
 The pretty baby Thou hast given,

Or ere that I have seen him play
 Around his father's knees, and known
 That *he* knew how my love has gone
 From all the world to him
 Think, God among the cherubim,
 How I shall shiver every day
 In Thy June sunshine, knowing where
 The grave-grass keeps it from his
 fair
 Still cheeks ! and feel at every tread
 His little body which is dead
 And hidden in the turfy fold,
 Doth make the whole warm earth
 a-cold !
 O God, I am so young, so young—
 I am not used to tears at nights
 Instead of slumber—nor to prayer
 With shaken lips and hands out-
 wrung !
 Thou knowest all my prayings were,
 ‘ I bless Thee, God, for past delights—
 Thank God ! ’ I am not used to bear
 Hard thoughts of death The earth
 doth cover
 No face from me of friend or lover :
 And must the first who teaches me
 The form of shrouds and funerals, be
 Mine own first-born beloved ? he
 Who taught me first this mother-
 love ?
 Dear Lord, Who spreadest out above
 Thy loving, transpierced hands to
 meet
 All lifted hearts with blessing sweet,—
 Pierce not my heart, my tender
 heart,
 Thou madest tender ! Thou who art
 So happy in Thy heaven away,
 Take not mine only bliss away ! ”

xi

She so had prayed and God, Who
 hears
 Through seraph-songs the sound of
 tears,
 From that beloved babe had ta'en
 The fever and the beating pain
 And more and more smiled Isobel
 To see the baby sleep so well—
 She knew not that she smiled I wís
 Until the pleasant gradual thought
 Which near her heart, the smile,
 enwrought,
 Now soft and slow, itself, did seem
 To float along a happy dream,
 Beyond it, into speech like this—

XII

"I prayed for thee, my little child,
And God has heard my prayer !
And when thy babyhood is gone,
We two together undefiled
By men's repinings, will kneel down
Upon His earth, which will be fair
(Not covering thee, sweet !) to us
twain,
And give Him thankful praise "

XIII

Dully and wildly drives the rain
Against the lattices drives the rain

XIV

"I thank Him now, that I can think
Of those same future days,
Nor from the harmless image shrink
Of what I there might see—
Strange babies on their mothers' knee,
Whose innocent soft faces might
From off mine eyelids strike the light,
With looks not meant for me !"

XV

Gustily blows the wind through the
rain,
As against the lattices drives the rain

XVI

"But now, O baby mine, together,
We turn this hope of ours again
To many an hour of summer weather
When we shall sit and intertwine
Our spirits, and instruct each other
In the pure loves of child and
mother !—
Two human loves make one divine "

XVII

The thunder tears through the wind
and the rain,
As full on the lattices drives the
rain

XVIII

"My little child, what wilt thou
choose ?
Let me look at thee and ponder
What gladness, from the gladnesses
Futurity is spreading under
Thy glad some sight ? Beneath the
trees,
Wilt thou lean all day, and lose
Thy spirit with the river seen
Intermittently between

The winding beechen alleys ?
Half in labour, half repose,
Like a shepherd keeping sheep,
Thou, with only thoughts to keep
Which never a bound will overpass,
And which are innocent as those
That feed among Arcadian valleys
Upon the dewy grass ?"

XIX

The large white owl that with age is
blind
That hath sate for years in the old
tree hollow,
Is carried away in a gust of wind !
His wings could bear him not as fast
As he goeth now the lattice past—
He is borne by the winds, the rains
do follow
His white wings to the blast out-
flowing,
He hooteth in going,
And still in the lightnings, coldly
glitter
His round unblinking eyes

XX

'Or, baby, wilt thou think it fitter
To be eloquent and wise ?
One upon whose lips the air
Turns to solemn verities,
For men to breathe anew and win
A deeper-seated life within ?
Wilt be a philosopher,
By whose voice the earth and skies
Shall speak to the unborn ?
Or a poet, broadly spreading
The golden immortalities
Of thy soul on natures lorn
And poor of such, them all to guard
From their decay ? beneath thy
treading,
Earth's flowers recovering hues of
Eden ?
And stars, drawn downward by thy
looks
To shine ascendant in thy books ?"

XXI

The tame hawk in the castle-yard,
How it screams to the lightning, with
its wet
Jagged plumes overhanging the
parapet !
And at the lady's door the hound
Scratches with a crying sound !

XXII

"But, O my babe, thy lids are laid
Close, fast upon thy cheek,—
And not a dream of power and sheen
Can make a passage up between !
Thy heart is of thy mother's make,
Thy looks are very meek !
And it will be their chosen place
To rest on some beloved face,
As these on thine—and let the noise
Of the whole world go on, nor drown
The tender silence of thy joys
Or when that silence shall have grown
Too tender for itself, the same
Yearning for sound,—to look above,
And utter its one meaning, Love,—
That *He* may hear His name !"

XXIII

No wind—no rain—no thunder !
The waters had trickled not slowly,
The thunder was not spent
Nor the wind near finishing
Who would have said that the storm
was diminishing ?
No wind—no rain—no thunder !
Their noises dropped asunder
From the earth and the firmament,
From the towers and the lattices,
Abrupt and echoless,
As ripe fruits on the ground, unshaken
wholly—
As life in death !
And sudden and solemn the silence
fell,
Startling the heart of Isobel,
As the tempest could not !
Against the door went panting the
breath
Of the lady's hound whose cry was
still—
And *she*, constrained howe'er she
would not,
Lifted her eyes, and saw the moon
Looking out of heaven alone
Upon the poplared hill,—
A calm of God, made visible,
That men might bless it at their
will

XXIV

The moonshine on the baby's face
Falleth clear and cold
The mother's looks have fallen back
To the same place
Because no moon with silver rack,

Nor broad sunrise in jasper skies,
Have power to hold
Our loving eyes,
Which still revert, as ever must
Wonder and Hope, to gaze on the
dust

XXV

The moonshine on the baby's face
Cold and clear remaineth !
The mother's looks do shrink away,—
The mother's looks return to stay,
As charmed by what paineth
Is any glamour in the case ?
Is it dream or is it sight ?
Hath the change upon the wild
Elements, that signs the night,
Passed upon the child ?
It is not dream, but sight !—

XXVI

The babe has awakened from sleep,
And unto the gaze of its mother,
Bent over it, lifted another !
Not the baby-looks that go
Unaimingly to and fro,
But an earnest gazing deep,
Such as soul gives soul at length,
When, by work and wail of years,
It winneth a solemn strength,
And mourneth as it wears !
A strong man could not brook
With pulse unhurried by fears,
To meet that baby's look
O'er glazed by manhood's tears—
The tears of the man full grown,
With the power to wring our own,
In the eyes all undefiled
Of a little three-months' child !
To see that babe-brow wrought
By the witnessing of thought,
To judgment's prodigy !
And the small soft mouth unweaned,
By mother's kiss o'erleaned
(Putting the sound of loving
Where no sound else was moving
Except the speechless cry)
Quickened to mind's expression,
Shaped to articulation,
Yea, speaking words—yea, naming
woe,
In tones that with it strangely went,
Because so baby-innocent,
As the child spake out to the mother
so !—

XXVII

"O mother, mother, loose thy prayer!
 Christ's name hath made it strong!
 It bindeth me, it holdeth me
 With its most loving cruelty,
 From floating my new soul along
 The happy heavenly air!
 It bindeth me, it holdeth me
 In all this dark, upon this dull
 Low earth, by only weepers trod!—
 It bindeth me, it holdeth me!—
 Mine angel looketh sorrowful
 Upon the face of God!"

XXVIII

"Mother, mother! can I dream
 Beneath your earthly trees?
 I had a vision and a gleam—
 I heard a sound more sweet than these
 When rippled by the wind
 Did you see the Dove, with wings
 Bathed in golden glisters
 From a sunless light behind,
 Dropping on me from the sky,
 Soft as mother's kiss, until
 I seemed to leap, and yet was still?
 Saw you how His love-large eye
 Looked upon me mystic calms,
 Till the power of His divine
 Vision was indrawn to mine?"

XXIX

"Oh, the dream within the dream!
 I saw celestial places even
 Oh, the vistas of high palms,
 Making finites of delight
 Through the heavenly infinite—
 Lifting up their green still tops
 To the heaven of Heaven!
 Oh, the sweet life-tree that drops
 Shade like light across the river
 Glorified in its for ever
 Flowing from the Throne!
 Oh, the shining holinesses
 Of the thousand, thousand faces
 God-sunned by the throned ONE!
 And made intense with such a love,
 That though I saw them turned
 above,
 Each loving seemed for also me!
 And, oh the Unspeakable! the HE,—
 The manifest in secrecies,
 Yet of mine own heart partaker!"

1 "For I say unto you, That in heaven there
 angels do always behold the face of My Father
 which is in heaven"—Matt xiii 10

With the overcoming look
 Of One Who hath been once forsook,
 And blesteth the forsaker
 Mother, mother, let me go
 Toward the Face that looketh so
 Through the mystic, winged Four,
 Whose are inward, outward eyes
 Dark with light of mysteries,
 And the restless evermore
 'Holy, holy, holy,'—through
 The sevenfold Lamps that burn in
 view
 Of cherubim and seraphim,—
 Through the four-and-twenty crowned
 Stately elders, white around,—
 Suffer me to go to Him!

XXX

"Is your wisdom very wise,
 Mother, on the narrow earth?
 Very happy, very worth
 That I should stay to learn?
 Are these air-corrupting sighs
 Fashioned by unlearned breath?
 Do the students' lamps that burn
 All night, illumine death?
 Mother, albeit thus be so,
 Loose thy prayer, and let me go
 Where that bright chief angel stands
 Apart from all his brother bands,
 Too glad for smiling! having bent
 In angelic wilderment
 O'er the depths of God, and brought
 Reeling, thence, one only thought
 To fill his whole eternity
 He the teacher is for me!
 He can teach what I would know—
 Mother, mother, let me go!"

XXXI

"Can your poet make an Eden
 No winter will undo?
 And light a starry fire while heeding
 His hearth's is burning too?
 Drown in music the earth's din?
 And keep his own wild soul within
 The law of his own harmony?
 Mother! albeit thus be so,
 Let me to my Heaven go!
 A little harp me waits thereby—
 A harp whose strings are golden all,
 And tuned to music spherical,
 Hanging on the green life-tree,
 Where no willows ever be
 Shall I miss that harp of mine?
 Mother, no!—the Eye divine

Turned upon it, makes it shine—
And when I touch it, poems sweet
Like separate souls shall fly from it,
Each to an immortal fytte
We shall all be poets there,
Gazing on the chiefest Fair!

XXVI

"Love! earth's love! and *can* we
love

Fixedly where all things move?
Can the sinning love each other?

Mother, mother,
I tremble in thy close embrace—
I feel thy tears adown my face—
Thy prayers do keep me out of bliss—
O dreary earthly love!

Loose thy prayer, and let me go
To the place which loving is,
Yet not sad! and when is given
Escape to *thee* from this below,
Thou shalt behold me that I wait
For thee beside the happy Gate,
And silence shall be up in Heaven
To hear our greeting kiss"

XXXIII

The nurse awakes in the morning sun,
And starts to see beside her bed
The lady, with a grandeur spread
Like pathos, o'er her face,—as one
God-satisfied and earth-undone—

The babe upon her arm was dead!
And the nurse could utter forth no
cry,—

She was awed by the calm in the
mother's eye

XXXIV

"Wake, nurse!"—the lady said
"We are waking—he and I—
I, on earth, and he, in sky!
And thou must help me to o'erlay
With garment white, this little clay
Which needs no more our lullaby

XXXV

"I changed the cruel prayer I made,
And bowed my meekened face, and
prayed
That God would do His will! and
thus

He did it, nurse! He parted us
And His sun shows victorious
The dead calm face,—and *I* am
calm,

And Heaven is hearkening a new
psalm

XXVII

"This earthly noise is too anear,
Too loud, and will not let me hear
The little harp My death will soon
Make silence"

And a sense of tune,
A satisfied love, meanwhile,
Which nothing earthly could despoil,
Sang on within her soul

XXVIII

Oh you,
Earth's tender and impassioned few,
Take courage to entrust your love
To Him so Named Who guards above
Its ends and shall fulfil!

Breaking the narrow prayers that
may

Befit your narrow hearts, away
In His broad, loving will

A ROMANCE OF THE GANGES

I

SEVEN maidens 'neath the midnight
Stand near the river-sea,
Whose water sweepeth white around
The shadow of the tree
The moon and earth are face to face,
And earth is slumbering deep,
The wave-voice seems the voice of
dreams

That wander through her sleep
The river floweth on

II

What bring they 'neath the midnight,
Beside the river-sea?
They bring that human heart,
wherein

No nightly calm can be,—
That droppeth never with the wind,
Nor drieth with the dew —
Oh, calm it, God! Thy calm is
broad

To cover spirits, too
The river floweth on

III

The maidens lean them over
The waters, side by side,
And shun each other's deepening eyes,
And gaze adown the tide

For each within a little boat
A little lamp hath put,
And heaped for freight some lily's
weight
Or scarlet rose half shut
The river floweth on

IV

Of a shell of cocoa carven,
Each little boat is made
Each carries a lamp, and carries a
flower,
And carries a hope unsaid
And when the boat hath carried the
lamp
Unquenched, till out of sight,
The maidens are sure that love will
endure,—
But love will fail with light
The river floweth on

V

Why, all the stars are ready
To symbolise the soul,
The stars, untroubled by the wind,
Unwearied as they roll,
And yet the soul by instinct sad
Reverts to symbols low—
To that small flame, whose very name
- Breathed o'er it, shakes it so!
The river floweth on

VI

Six boats are on the river
Seven maidens on the shore,
While still above them steadfastly
The stars shine evermore
Go, little boats, go soft and safe,
And guard the symbol spark!—
The boats aright go safe and bright
Across the waters dark
The river floweth on

VII

The maiden Luti watcheth
Where onwardly they float
That look in her dilating eyes
Might seem to drive her boat,
Her eyes still mark the constant
fire,
And kindling unawares
That hopeful while she lets a smile
Creep silent through her prayers
The river floweth on

VIII

The smile—where hath it wandered?
She riseth from her knee,

She holds her dark, wet locks away—
There is no light to see!
She cries a quick and bitter cry—
"Nuleen, launch me thine!
We must have light abroad to-night,
For all the wreck of mine"
The river floweth on

IX

"I do remember watching
Beside this river-bed
When on my childish knee was laid
My dying father's head
I turned mine own, to keep the tears
From falling on his face—
What doth it prove, when Death and
Love
Choose out the self-same place?"
The river floweth on

X

"They say the dead are joyful,
The death-change here receiving
Who say—ah, me!—who dare to say
Where joy comes to the living?
Thy boat, Nuleen! look not sad—
Light up the waters rather!
I weep no faithless lover where
I wept a loving father"
The river floweth on

XI

"My heart foretold his falsehood
Ere my little boat grew dim
And though I closed mine eyes to
dream
That one last dream of *him*,
They shall not now be wet to see
The shining vision go
From earth's cold love, I look above
To the holy house of snow"¹
The river floweth on

XII

"Come *thou*—thou never knewest
A grief, that thou shouldst fear one,
Thou wearest still the happy look
That shines beneath a dear one!
Thy humming-bird is in the sun,"²

¹ The Hindoo heaven is localised on the summit of Mount Meru—one of the mountains of Himalaya or Himmeleh, which signifies I believe, in Sanscrit, 'the abode of snow,' 'winter,' or 'coldness'

² Hamadeva, the Indian god of love, is imagined to wander through the three worlds, accompanied by the humming-bird, cuckoo, and gentle breezes

Thy cuckoo in the grove,
And all the three broad worlds, for
thee
Are full of wandering love "
The river floweth on

XIII

"Why, maiden dost thou loiter?
What secret wouldst thou cover?
That peepul cannot hide thy boat,
And I can guess thy lover
I heard thee sob his name in sleep
It was a name I knew—
Come little maid be not afraid—
But let us prove him true!"
The river floweth on

XIV

The little maiden cometh—
She cometh shy and slow,
I ween she seeth through her lids,
They drop adown so low
Her tresses meet her small bare feet—
She stands and speaketh nought,
Yet blusheth red, as if she said
The name she only thought
The river floweth on

XV

She knelt beside the water,
She lighted up the flame,
And o'er her youthful forehead's calm
The fitful radiance came—
"Go, little boat, go, soft and safe,
And guard the symbol spak!"
Soft, safe, doth float the little boat
Across the waters dark
The river floweth on

XVI

Glad tears her eyes have blinded,
The light they cannot reach
She turneth with that sudden smile
She learnt before her speech—
"I do not hear his voice! the tears
Have dimmed my light away!
But the symbol light will last to-
night—
The love will last for aye"
The river floweth on

XVII

Then Luti spake behind her—
Outspake she bitterly

"By the symbol light that lasts to-
night,
Wilt vow a vow to me?"—
Nuleeni gazeth up her face—
Soft answer maketh she
"By loves that last when lights are
past,
I vow that vow to thee!"
The river floweth on

XVIII

An earthly look had Luti,
Though her voice was deep as
prayer—
"The rice is gathered from the plains
To cast upon thine hair!"
But when he comes, his marriage-band
Around thy neck to throw
Thy bride-smile raise to meet his gaze,
And whisper,—*"There is one betrays,
When Luti suffers woe"*
The river floweth on

XIX

"And when in seasons after,
Thy little bright-faced son
Shall lean against thy knee, and ask
What deeds his sire hath done
Press deeper down thy mother's rule
His glossy curls among—
View deep his pretty childish eyes,
And whisper,—*"There is none denies,
When Luti speaks of wrong"*
The river floweth on

XX

Nuleeni looked in wonder,
Yet softly answered she—
"By loves that last when lights are
past,
I vowed that vow to thee
But why glads it thee that a bride-
day be
By a word of woe defiled?"
That a word of wrong take the cradle-
song
From the ear of a sinless child?"—
"Why," Luti said, and her laugh
was dread,
And her eyes dilated wild—
"That the fair new love may her
bridegroom prove,
And the father shame the child!"
The river floweth on

¹ The casting of rice upon the head, and the
fixing of the band or tali about the neck, are
parts of the Hindoo marriage ceremonial

XXI

"Thou flowest still, O river,
 Thou flowest 'neath the moon—
 Thy lily hath not changed a leaf,¹
 Thy charmed lute a tune!
 He mixed his voice with thine—and his
 Was all I heard around,
 But now, beside his chosen bride,
 I hear the river's sound"
 The river floweth on

XXII

"I gaze upon her beauty,
 Through the tresses that enwreath
 it
 The light above thy wave, is hers—
 My rest, alone beneath it
 Oh give me back the dying look
 My father gave thy water!
 Gave back!—and let a little love
 O'erwatch his weary daughter!"
 The river floweth on

XXIII

"Give back!" she hath departed—
 The word is wandering with her,
 And the stricken maidens hear afar
 The step and cry together
 Frail symbols? None are frail enow
 For mortal joys to borrow!—
 While bright doth float Nuleen's boat,
 She weepeth, dark with sorrow
 The river floweth on

AN ISLAND

"All goeth but Goddiss will"—*Old Poet*

I

My dream is of an island place
 Which distant seas keep lonely,
 A little island, on whose face
 The stars are watchers only
 Those bright still stars! they need
 not seem
 Brighter or stiller in my dream

II

An island full of hills and dells,
 All rumpled and uneven
 With green recesses, sudden swells,
 And odorous valleys driven
 So deep and straight that always
 there
 The wind is cradled to soft air

¹ The Ganges is represented as a white woman, with a water lily in her right hand, and in her left a lute

III

Hills running up to heaven for light
 Through woods that half-way ran!
 As if the wild earth mimicked right
 The wilder heart of man,
 Only it shall be greener far
 And gladder than hearts ever are

IV

More like, perhaps, that mountain
 piece
 Of Dante's paradise,
 Disrupt to an hundred hills like these,
 In falling from the skies—
 Bringing within it, all the roots
 Of heavenly trees, and flowers and
 fruits

V

For saving where the grey rocks
 strike
 Their javelins up the azure,
 Or where deep fissures miser-like,
 Hoard up some fountain treasure,—
 (And e'en in them—stoop down and
 hear—
 Leaf sounds with water in your
 ear!)

VI

The place is all awake with trees—
 Limes, myrtles purple-beaded,
 Acacias having drunk the lees
 Of the night-dew, faint-headed,
 And wan, grey olive-woods which seem
 The fittest foliage for a dream

VII

Trees, trees on all sides! they com-
 bine
 Their plummy shades to throw,
 Through whose clear fruit and
 blossom fine
 Whene'er the sun may go,
 The ground beneath he deeply stains,
 As passing through cathedral panes

VIII

But little needs this earth of ours
 That shining from above her,
 When many Pleiades of flowers
 (Not one lost) star her over,
 The rays of their unnumbered hues
 Being all refracted by the dews

IX

Wide-petalled plants that boldly drink
 The Amreeta of the sky,

Shut bells, that, dull with rapture, sink,
And lolling buds, half shy,
I cannot count them, but between,
Is room for grass and mosses green,

x

And brooks that glass in different
strengths

All colours in disorder,
Or gathering up their silver lengths
Beside their winding border
Sleep haunted through the slumber
hidden

By lilies white as dreams in Eden

xi

Nor think each arched tree with each
Too closely interlaces
To admit of vistas out of reach,
And broad moon-lighted places
Upon whose sward the antlered deer
May view their double image clear

xii

For all this island's creature-full,
Kept happy not by halves,
Wild cows, that at the vine-wreaths
pull
Then low back at their calves
With tender lowings, to approve
The warm mouths milking them for
love

xiii

Free gamesome horses, antelopes,
And harmless leaping leopards,
And buffaloes upon the slopes,
And sheep unrul'd by shepherds,
Hares, lizards, hedgehogs, badgers,
mice,
Snakes, squirrels, frogs, and butter-
flies

xiv

And birds that live there in a crowd—
Horned owls rapt nightingales,
Larks bold with heaven, and peacocks
proud,
Self-sphered in those grand tails,
All creatures glad and safe, I deem,—
No guns nor springes in my dream!

xv

The island's edges are a-wing
With trees that overbranch
The sea with song-birds welcoming
The curlews to green change,
And doves from half-closed lids espy
The red and purple fish go by

xvi

One dove is answering in trust
The water every minute,
Thinking so soft a murmur must
Have her mate's cooing in it,
So softly doth earth's beauty round
Infuse itself in ocean's sound

xvii

My sanguine soul bounds forwarder
To meet the bounding waves!
Beside them straightway I repair,
To live within the caves,
And near me two or three may dwell
Whom dreams fantastic please as well

xviii

Long winding caverns' glittering far
Into a crystal distance,
Through clefts of which, shall many
a star
Shine clear without resistance,
And carry down its rays the smell
Of flowers above invisible

xix

I said that two or three might choose
Their dwelling near mine own
Those who would change man's voice
and use
For nature's way and tone—
Man's veering heart and careless eyes,
For Nature's steadfast sympathies

xx

Ourselves, to meet her faithfulness,
Shall play a faithful part,
Her beautiful shall ne'er address
The monstrous at our heart
Her musical shall ever touch
Something within us also such

xxi

Yet shall she not our mistress live,
As doth the moon of ocean,
Though gently as the moon she give
Our thoughts a light and motion
More like a harp of many lays,
Moving its master while he plays.

xxii

No sod in all that island doth
Yawn open for the dead,
No wind hath borne a traitor's oath,
No earth, a mourner's tread,
We cannot say by stream or shade,
"I suffered *here*,—was *here* betrayed"

XXIII

Our only "farewell" we shall laugh
 To shifting cloud or hour,
 And use our only epitaph
 To some bud turned a flower
 Our only tears shall serve to prove
 Excess in pleasure or in love

XXV

Our fancies shall their plumage catch
 From fairest island birds
 Whose eggs let young ones out at
 hatch,

Born singing! then our words
 Unconsciously shall take the dyes
 Of those prodigious fantasies

XXV

Yea, soon, no consonant unsmooth
 Our smile-tuned lips shall reach,
 Sounds sweet as Hellas spake in youth
 Shall glide into our speech,—
 (What music certes can you find
 As soft as voices which are kind?)

XXVI

And often by the joy without
 And in us, overcome,
 We, through our musing shall let float
 Such poems,—sitting dumb,—
 As Pindar might have writ if he
 Had tended sheep in Arcady,

XXVII

Or Æschylus—the pleasant fields
 He died in, longer knowing,
 Or Homer, had men's sins and shields
 Been lost in Meles flowing,
 Or Poet Plato, had the undim
 Unsetting Godlight broke on him

XXVIII

Choose me the cave most worthy
 choice,
 To make a place for prayer,
 And I will choose a praying voice
 To pour our spirits there
 How silverly the echoes run—
*"Thy will be done,"—"Thy will be
 done"*

XXIX

Gently yet strangely uttered words!—
 They lift me from my dream
 The island fadeth with its swards
 That did no more than seem!
 The streams are dry, no sun could
 find—
 The fruits are fallen, without wind!—

B P

XXX

So oft the doing of God's will
 Our foolish wills undoeth!
 And yet what idle dream breaks ill,
 Which morning-light subdueth?
 And who would murmur and mis-
 doubt,
 When God's great sunrise finds him
 out?

THE DESERTED GARDEN

I MIND me in the days departed,
 How often underneath the sun
 With childish bounds I used to run
 To a garden long deserted

The beds and walks were vanished
 quite,
 And wheresoe'er had struck the spade,
 The greenest grasses Nature laid,
 To sanctify her right

I called the place my wilderness
 For no one entered there but I
 The sheep looked in the grass to espy,
 And passed it ne'ertheless

The trees were interwoven wild
 And spread their boughs enough about
 To keep both sheep and shepherd out,
 But not a happy child

Adventurous joy it was for me!
 I crept beneath the boughs, and found
 A circle smooth of mossy ground
 Beneath a poplar-tree

Old garden rose-trees hedged it in,
 Bedropt with roses waxen-white
 Well satisfied with dew and light,
 And careless to be seen

Long years ago, it might befall,
 When all the garden flowers were
 trim,

The grave old gardener prided him
 On these the most of all,—

Some Lady, stately overmuch
 Here moving with a silken noise,
 Has blushed beside them at the voice
 That likened her to such

Or these to make a diadem,
 She often may have plucked and
 twined,
 Half-smiling as it came to mind
 That few would look at *them*

I

Oh, little thought that Lady proud,
A child would watch her fair white
 rose,
When buried lay her whiter brows,
And silk was changed for shroud !—

Nor thought that gardener (full of
 scorns
For men unlearned and simple phrase),
A child would bring it all its praise,
By creeping through the thorns !—

To me upon my low moss seat,
Though never a dream the roses sent
Of science or love's compliment,
 I ween they smelt as sweet

It did not move my grief to see
The trace of human step departed
Because the garden was deserted,
 The blither place for me !

Friends, blame me not ! a narrow ken,
Hath childhood 'twixt the sun and
 sward

We draw the moral afterward—
 We feel the gladness then

And gladdest hours for me did glide
In silence at the rose-tree wall
A thrush made gladness musical
 Upon the other side

Nor he nor I did e'er incline
To peck or pluck the blossoms white—
How should I know but blossoms
 might

 Lead lives as glad as mine ?

To make my hermit-home complete,
I brought clear water from the spring
Praised in its own low murmuring,—
 And cresses glossy wet

And so, I thought my likeness grew
(Without the melancholy tale)
To "gentle hermit of the dale,"
 And Angelina too

For oft I read within my nook
Such minstrel stories ! till the breeze
Made sounds poetic in the trees,—
 And then I shut the book

If I shut this wherein I write,
I hear no more the wind athwart
Those trees,—nor feel that childish
 heart
Delighting in delight

My childhood from my life is parted
My footstep from the moss which
 drew

Its fairy circle round anew
 The garden is deserted

Another thrush may there rehearse
The madrigals which sweetest are,
No more for me !—myself afar
 Do sing a sadder verse

Ah me, ah me ! when erst I lay
In that child's nest so greenly wrought,
I laughed unto myself and thought
 " The time will pass away "

And still I laughed, and did not fear
But that whene'er was past away
The childish time, some happier play
 My womanhood would cheer

I knew the time would pass away,
And yet, beside the rose-tree wall,
Dear God, how seldom, if at all,
 Did I look up to pray !

The time is past—and now that
 grows

The cypress high among the trees,
And I behold white sepulchres
 As well as the white rose,—

When wiser, meeker thoughts are
 given,

And I have learnt to lift my face,
Reminded how earth's greenest place
 The colour draws from heaven,—

It something saith for earthly pain,
But more for heavenly promise free,
That I who was, would shrink to be
 That happy child again

THE SOUL'S TRAVELLING

Ὁ ἡ ψυχὴ

Περὰ τὰς τρυφὰς

—SYNESIUS

I

I DWELL amid the city ever
The great humanity which beats
Its life along the stony streets,
Like a strong and unsunned river
In a self-made course,
I sit and hearken while it rolls
Very sad and very hoarse
Certes is the flow of souls
Infinitest tendencies,
By the finite, predest and pent,—
In the finite, turbulent

And how we tremble in surprise,
When sometimes, with an awful
sound,
God's great plummet strikes the
ground !

II

The champ of the steeds on the silver
bit,
As they whirl the rich man's carriage
by,
The beggar's whine as he looks at it,—
But it goes too fast for charity
The trail on the street of the poor
man's broom,
That the lady who walks to her
palace-home,
On her silken skirt may catch no dust
The tread of the business-men who
must
Count their per cents by the paces
they take
The cry of the babe unheard of its
mother
Though it lie on her breast, while she
thinks of the other
Laid yesterday where it will not wake
The flower-girl's prayer to buy roses
and pinks
Held out in the smoke, like stars by
day,
The gin-door's oath that hollowly
chinks
Guilt upon grief and wrong upon
hate,
The cabman's cry to get out of the
way,
The dustman's call down the area-
gate,
The young maid's jest, and the old
wife's scold,
The haggling talk of the boys at a
stall,
The fight in the street which is backed
for gold,—
The plea of the lawyers in Westmin-
ster Hall,
The drop on the stones of the blind
man's staff,
As he trades in his own grief's sacred-
ness,
The brothel shriek, and the New-
gate laugh,
The hum upon 'Change, and the
organ's grinding
The grinder's face being nevertheless

Dry and vacant of even woe
While the children's hearts are leap-
ing so

At the merry music's winding !
The black-plumed funeral's creeping
train

Long and slow (and yet they will go
As fast as Life though it hurry and
strain !)

Creeping the populous houses through
And nodding their plumes at either
side,

At many a house where an infant, new
To the sunshiny world, has just
struggled and cried,

At many a house, where sitteth a bride
Trying the morrow's coronals

With a scarlet blush, to-day —

Slowly creep the funerals,
As none should hear the noise and say,
The living, the living, must go away
To multiply the dead !

Hark ! an upward shout is sent !
In grave strong joy from tower to
steeple

The bells ring out—
The trumpets sound, the people shout,
The young Queen goes to her parlia-
ment

She turneth round her large blue eyes,
More bright with childish memories
Than royal hopes, upon the people ;
On either side she bows her head

Lowly with a Queenly grace
And smile most trusting-innocent,
As if she smiled upon her mother !

The thousands press before each other
To bless her to her face

And booms the deep majestic voice
Through trump and drum,—“ May
the Queen rejoice

In the people's liberties ! ”—

III

I dwell amid the city,
And hear the flow of souls in act
and speech

For pomp or trade, for merrymake or
folly

I hear the confluence and sum of each,
And that is melancholy !—

Thy voice is a complaint, O crowned
city,

The blue sky covering thee, like God's
great pity

IV

O blue sky ! it mindeth me
Of places where I used to see
Its vast unbroken circle thrown
From the far pale-peaked hill
Out to the last verge of ocean—
As by God's arm it were done
Then for the first time, with the
emotion

Of that first impulse on it still
Oh, we spirits fly at will,
Faster than the winged steed
Whereof in old book we read,
With the sunlight foaming back
From his flanks, to a misty wrack,
And his nostril reddening proud
As he breasteth the steep thunder-
cloud !

Smoother than Sabrina's chair
Ghiding up from wave to air,
While she smileth debonaire
Yet holy, coldly and yet brightly,
Like her own mooned waters nightly,
Through her dripping hair

V

Very fast and smooth we fly,
Spirits, though the flesh be by
All looks feed not from the eye,
Nor all hearings from the ear,
We can hearken and espy
Without either, we can journey,
Bold and gay, as knight to tourney,
And though we wear no visor down
To dark our countenance, the foe
Shall never chafe us as we go

VI

I am gone from peopled town !
It passeth its street-thunder round
My body which yet hears no sound
For nor another sound, another
Vision my soul's senses have—
O'er a hundred valleys deep,
Where the hills' green shadows sleep
Scarce known because the valley-trees
Cross those upland images—
O'er a hundred hills, each other
Watching to the western wave—
I have travelled,—I have found
The silent, lone, remembered ground

VII

I have found a grassy niche,
Hollowed in a seaside hill,
As if the ocean-grandeur, which
Is aspectable from the place,

Had struck the hill as with a mace
Sudden and cleaving You might fill
That little nook with the little cloud
Which sometimes lieth by the moon
To beautify a night of June,
A cave-like nook, which, opening all
To the wide sea, is disallowed
From its own earth's sweet pastoral,
Cave-like, but roofless overhead,
And made of verdant banks instead
Of any rocks, with flowerets spread,
Instead of spar and stalactite
Cowslips and daisies, gold and
white
Such pretty flowers on such green
sward,
You think the sea they look toward
Doth serve them for another sky
As warm and blue as that on high

VIII

And in this hollow is a seat,
And when you shall have crept to it,
Slipping down the banks too steep
To be o'erbrowsed by the sheep,
Do not think—though at your feet
The cliffs' disrupt—you shall behold
The line where earth and ocean meet,
You sit too much above to view
The solemn confluence of the two
You can hear them as they greet,
You can hear that evermore
Distance-softened noise, more old
Than Nereid's singing,—the tide
spent

Joining soft issues with the shore
In harmony of discontent,—
And when you hearken to the grave
Lamenting of the underwave,
You must believe in earth's solemn union,
Albeit you witness not the union

IX

Except that sound, the place is full
Of silences, which when you cull
By any word, it thrills you so
That presently you let them grow
To meditation's fullest length
Across your soul with a soul's
strength
And as they touch your soul, they
borrow
As of its grandeur, so its sorrow,—
That deathly odour which the clay
Leaves on its deathlessness away

X

Always! always! and must this be?
 Rapid Soul from city gone,
 Dost thou carry inwardly
 What doth make the city's moan?
 Must this deep sigh of thine own
 Haunt thee with humanity?
 Green-visioned banks that are too
 steep
 To be o'erbrowsed by the sheep,
 May all sad thoughts adown you creep
 Without a shepherd?—Mighty sea,
 Can we dwarf thy magnitude,
 And fit it to our straitest mood?—
 O fair, fair Nature! are we thus
 Impotent and querulous
 Among thy workings glorious,
 Wealth and sanctities—that still
 Leave us vacant and defiled,
 And wailing like a kissed child,
 Kissed soft against his will?

XI

God, God!—
 With a child's voice I cry,
 Weak, sad, confidingly—
 God, God!
 Thou knowest eyelids raised not
 always up
 Unto Thy love (as none of ours are),
 droop,
 As ours, o'er many a tear!
 Thou knowest, though Thy universe
 is broad,
 Two little tears suffice to cover all
 Thou knowest,—Thou, Who art so
 prodigal
 Of beauty,—we are oft but stricken
 deer,
 Expiring in the woods—that care
 for none
 Of those delightful flowers they
 die upon

XII

O blissful Mouth, which breathed
 the mournful breath
 We name our souls,—self spoilt!—
 by that strong passion
 Which paled Thee once with sighs,—
 by that strong death
 Which made Thee once unbreathing—
 from the wrack,
 Themselves have called around them,
 call them back—
 Back to Thee in continuous aspiration!
 For here, O Lord,

For here they travel vainly,—vainly
 pass
 From city pavement to untrodden
 sward,
 Where the lark finds her deep nest in
 the grass
 Cold with the earth's last dew Yea,
 very vain
 The greatest speed of all these souls
 of men,
 Unless they travel upward to Thy
 Throne!
 There, sittest THOU, the satisfying
 ONE
 With help for sins and holy perfect-
 ings
 For all requirements—while the arch-
 angel, raising
 Unto Thy face his full ecstatic gazing,
 Forgets the rush and capture of his
 wings!

SOUNDS

Ηκούσας η ουκ ηκούσας, ———
 ÆSCHYLUS

I

HEARKEN, hearken!
 The rapid river carrieth
 Many noises underneath
 The hoary ocean,
 Teaching his solemnity,
 Sounds of inland life and glee,
 Learnt beside the waving tree
 When the winds in summer prank
 Toss the shades from bank to bank,
 And the quick rains, in emotion
 Which rather glads than grieves,
 Count and visibly rehearse
 The pulses of the universe
 Upon the summer leaves—
 Learnt among the lilies straight,
 When they bow them to the weight
 Of many bees, whose hidden hum
 Seemeth from themselves to come—
 Learnt among the grasses green,
 Where the rustling mice are seen,
 By the gleaming, as they run,
 Of their quick eyes in the sun,
 And lazy sheep are browsing through,
 With their noses railed in dew,
 And the squirrel leaps adown,
 Holding fast the filbert brown,
 And the lark, with more of mirth
 In his song than suits the earth,
 Droppeth some in soaring high,
 To pour the rest out in the sky;

While the woodland doves, apart
 In the copse's leafy heart,
 Solitary not ascetic,
 Hidden and yet vocal, seem
 Joining, in a lovely psalm
 Man's despondence, nature's calm,
 Half mystical and half pathetic,
 Like a sighing in a dream¹
 All these sounds the river telleth,
 Softened to an undertone
 Which ever and anon he swelleth
 By a burden of his own,
 In the ocean's ear
 Ay! and ocean seems to hear
 With an inward gentle scorn,
 Smiling to his caverns worn

II

Hearken, hearken!
 The child is shouting at his play
 Just in the tramping funeral's way,
 The widow moans as she turns aside
 To shun the face of the blushing
 bride,
 While, shaking the tower of the
 ancient church,
 The marriage bells do swing,
 And in the shadow of the porch
 An idiot sits, with his lean hands full
 Of hedgerow flowers and a poet's
 skull,
 Laughing loud and gibbering
 Because it is so brown a thing,
 While he sticketh the gaudy poppies
 red
 In and out the senseless head
 Where all sweet fancies grew instead
 And you may hear, at the self-same
 time,
 Another poet who reads his rhyme,
 Low as a brook in the summer air,—
 Save when he droppeth his voice
 adown,
 To dream of the amaranthine crown

¹ "While floating up bright forms ideal
 Mistress, or friend, around me stream,
 Half sense supplied, and half unreal
 Like music mingling with a dream"

John Kenyon

I do not doubt that the "music" of the two concluding lines mingled though very unconsciously, with my own dream, and gave their form and pressure to the above distich. The ideas, however, being sufficiently distinct, I am satisfied with sending this note to the press after my verses, and with acknowledging another obligation to the valued friend to whom I already owe so many

His mortal brows shall wear,
 And a baby cries with a feeble sound
 'Neath the weary weight of the life
 new-found,
 And an old man groans—with his
 testament
 Only half-signed—for the life that's
 spent,
 And lovers twain do softly say,
 As they sit on a grave, "For aye,
 for aye!"
 And foemen twain, while Earth,
 their mother,
 Looks greenly upward, curse each
 other
 A schoolboy drones his task, with
 looks
 Cast over the page to the elm-tree
 rooks
 A lonely student cries aloud,
 "Eureka!" clapping at his shroud,
 A bel dame's age-cracked voice doth
 sing
 To a little infant slumbering,
 A maid forgotten weeps alone,
 Muffling her sobs on the tysting
 stone,
 A sick man wakes at his own mouth's
 wail,
 A gossip coughs in her thrice told tale,
 A muttering gamester shakes the dice,
 A reaper foretells good luck from the
 skies,
 A monarch vows as he lifts his hand
 to them,
 A patriot leaving his native land to
 them,
 Cries to the world against perjured
 state,
 A priest disserts upon linen skirts,
 A sinner screams for one hope more,
 A dancer's feet do palpitate
 A piper's music out on the floor,
 And nigh to the awful Dead, the living
 Low speech and stealthy steps are
 giving,
 Because he cannot hear,
 And he who on that narrow bier
 Has room enough, is closely wound
 In silence piercing more than sound

III

Hearken, hearken!
 God speaketh to thy soul,
 Using the supreme voice which doth
 confound

All life with consciousness of Deity,
 All senses into one,—
 As the seer-saint of Patmos, loving
 John,
 For whom did backward roll
 The cloud-gate of the future, turned
 to see
 The Voice which spake It speaketh
 now—
 Through the regular breath of the
 calm creation,
 Through the moan of the creature's
 desolation,
 Striking, and in its stroke, resembling
 The memory of a solemn vow,
 Which pierceth the din of a festival
 Toone in the midst—and he letteth fall
 The cup, with a sudden trembling

IV

Hearken, hearken !
 God speaketh in thy soul,
 Saying, "O thou, that movest
 With feeble steps across this earth
 of Mine,
 To break beside the fount thy golden
 bowl
 And spill its purple wine,—
 Look up to heaven and see how like
 a scroll,
 My right hand hath thine immortality
 In an eternal grasping ! Thou, that
 lovest
 The songful birds and grasses under-
 foot,
 And also what change mars and
 tombs pollute—
 I am the end of love !—give love to
 Me !
 O thou that sinnest, grace doth more
 abound
 Than all thy sin ! sit still beneath
 My rood,
 And count the droppings of My
 victim-blood,
 And seek none other sound !"

V

Hearken, hearken !
 Shall we hear the lapsing river
 And our brother's sighing, ever,
 And not the voice of God ?

NIGHT AND THE MERRY MAN

NIGHT

'NEATH my moon what doest thou
 With a somewhat paler brow

Than she giveth to the ocean ?
 He without a pulse or motion,
 Muttering low before her stands
 Lifting his invoking hands,
 Like a seer before a sprite,
 To catch her oracles of light
 But thy soul out-trembles now
 Many pulses on thy brow !
 Where be all thy laughers clear,
 Others laughed, alone to hear ?
 Where, thy quaint jests, said for fame ?
 Where, thy dances, turned to game ?
 Where, thy festive companies,
 Mooned o'er with ladies' eyes,
 All more bright for thee, I trow ?
 'Neath my moon, what doest thou ?

THE MERRY MAN

I am digging my warm heart,
 Till I find its coldest part
 I am digging wide and low,
 Further than a spade will go,
 Till that, when the pit is deep
 And large enough, I there may heap
 All my present pain and past
 Joy, dead things that look aghast
 By the daylight—Now 'tis done !
 Throw them in, by one and one !
 I must laugh, at rising sun

Memories—of fancy's golden
 Treasures which my hands have
 holden,
 Till the chillness made them ache,
 Of childhood's hopes, that used to
 wake

If birds were in a singing strain,
 And for less cause, sleep again,
 Of the moss seat in the wood,
 Where I trysted solitude,
 Of the hill-top, where the wind
 Used to follow me behind,
 Then in sudden rush to blind
 Both my glad eyes with my hair,
 Taken gladly in the snare !

Of the climbing up the rocks,—
 Of the playing 'neath the oaks,
 Which retain beneath them now
 Only shadow of the bough
 Of the lying on the grass
 While the clouds did overpass,—
 Only they, so lightly driven
 Seeming betwixt me and Heaven !
 Of the little prayers serene
 Murmuring of earth and sin,

Of large-leaved philosophy,
Leaning from my childish knee,
Of poetic book sublime,
Soul-kissed for the first dear time,—
Greek or English,—ere I knew
Life was not a poem too !
Throw them in, by one and one !
I must laugh, at rising sun

Of the glorious ambitions,
Yet unquenched by their fruitions,
Of the reading out the nights
Of the straining at mad heights,
Of achievements, less desried
By a dear few, than magnified,
Of praises, from the many earned
When praise from love was undiscerned,
Of the sweet reflecting gladness,
Softened by itself to sadness—
Throw them in, by one and one !
I must laugh, at rising sun

What are these ? more, more than these !

Throw in, dearer memories !—
Of voices—whereof but to speak,
Makes mine own all sunk and weak,
Of smiles, the thought of which is sweeping

All my soul to floods of weeping,
Of looks, whose absence fain would weigh

My looks to the ground for aye,
Of clasping hands—ah me ! I wring
Mine, and in a tremble fling
Downward, downward, all this paining !

Partings, with the sting remaining,
Meetings, with a deeper throe,
Since the joy is ruined so,
Changes, with a fiery burning—
(Shadows upon all the turning)
Thoughts of—with a storm they came—

Them, I have not breath to name !
Downward, downward, be they cast
In the pit ! and now at last
My work beneath the moon is done,
And I shall laugh, at rising sun

But let me pause or ere I cover
All my treasures darkly over
I will speak not in thine ears,
Only tell my beaded tears
Silently, most silently !
When the last is calmly told,

Let that same moist rosary
With the rest sepulchre'd be
Finished now The darksome mould
Sealeth up the darksome pit
I will lay no stone on it
Grasses I will sow instead,
Fit for Queen Titania's tread,
Flowers, encoloured with the sun,
And *at at* written upon none
Thus, whenever sailth by
The Lady World of dainty eye,
Not a grief shall here remain,
Silken shoon to damp or stain
And while she lisps, "I have not seen
Any place more smooth and clean"

Here she cometh !—Ha, ha !—who
Laughs as loud as I can do ?

EARTH AND HER PRAISERS

I

THE Earth is old,
Six thousand winters make her heart
a-cold,
The sceptre slanteth from her palsied
hold
She saith, " 'Las me !—God's word
that I was 'good'
Is taken back to heaven,
From whence when any sound comes,
I am riven
By some sharp bolt And now no
angel would
Descend with sweet dew-silence on
my mountains,
To glorify the lovely river-fountains
That gush along their side
I see, O weary change ! I see instead
This human wrath and pride,
These thrones, and tombs, judicial
wrong, and blood
And bitter words are poured upon
mine head—
'O Earth ! thou art a stage for
tricks unholy,
A church for most remorseful melan-
choly !
Thou art so spoilt, we should forget
we had
An Eden in thee,—wert thou not so
sad'
Sweet children, I am old ! ye, every
one,
Do keep me from a portion of my sun .

Give praise in change for brightness !
That I may shake my hills in infiniteness
Of breezy laughter, as in youthful mirth,
To hear Earth's sons and daughters praising Earth."

II

Whereupon a child began,
With spirit running up to man,
As by angel's shining ladder,
(May he find no cloud above !)
Seeming he had ne'er been sadder
All his days than now—
Sitting in the chestnut grove,
With that joyous overflow
Of smiling from his mouth, o'er brow
And cheek and chin, as if the breeze
Leaning tricksy from the trees
To part his golden hairs, had blown
Into an hundred smiles that one.

III

"O rare, rare Earth!" he saith,
"I will praise thee presently;
Not to-day; I have no breath!
I have hunted squirrels three—
Two ran down in the furzy hollow,
Where I could not see nor follow;
One sits at the top of the filbert tree,
With a yellow nut, and a mock at me.
Presently it shall be done,
When I see which way those two have
run;
When the mocking one at the filbert-
top
Shall leap a-down, and beside me stop;
Then, rare Earth, rare Earth,
Will I pause, having known thy worth,
To say all good of thee!"

IV

Next a lover, with a dream
'Neath his waking eyelids hidden,
And a frequent sigh unbidden,
And an idlesse all the day
Beside a wandering stream,
And a silence that is made
Of a word he dares not say,—
Shakes slow his pensive head.
"Earth, Earth!" saith he,
"If spirits, like thy roses, grew
On one stalk, and winds austere
Could but only blow them near,
To share each other's dew;

If, when summer rains agree
To beautify thy hills, I knew
Looking off them I might see
Some one very beauteous too,—
Then, Earth," saith he,
"I would praise . . . nay, nay—
not thee!"

V

Will the pedant name her next?
Crabbed with a crabbed text,
Sits he in his study ncok,
With his elbow on a book,
And with stately crossed knees,
And a wrinkle deeply thrild
Through his lowering brow,
Caused by making proofs enow,
That Plato in "Parmenides"
Meant the same Spinoza did;
Or, that an hundred of the groping
Like himself, had made one Homer,—
Homeros being a misnomer,
What hath he to do with praise
Of Earth, or aught? whene'er the
sloping
Sunbeams through his window daze
His eyes off from the learned phrase,
Straightway he draws close the curtain.
May abstraction keep him dumb!
Were his lips to ope, 'tis certain
"Derivatum est" would come.

VI

Then a mourner moveth pale
In a silence full of wail,
Raising not his sunken head,
Because he wandered last that way
With that one beneath the clay:
Weeping not, because that one,
The only one who would have said,
"Cease to weep, beloved!" has gone
Whence returneth comfort none.
The silence breaketh suddenly,—
"Earth, I praise thee!" crieth he:
"Thou hast a grave for also me."

VII

Ha, a poet! I know him by
The ecstasy-dilated eye,
Not uncharged with tears that ran
Upward from his heart of man;
By the cheek, from hour to hour,
Kindled bright, or sunken wan,
With a sense of lonely power;
By the brow, uplifted higher

Than others, for more low declining,
By the lip which words of fire
Overflowing have burned white,
While they gave the nations light!
Ay, in every time and place
Ye may know the poet's face
By the shade, or shining

VIII

'Neath a golden cloud he stands,
Spreading his impassioned hands
"O God's Earth!" he saith, "the
sign

From the Father-soul to mine
Of all beauteous mysteries,
Of all perfect images,
Which, divine in His divine,
In my human only are
Very excellent and fair!—
Think not, Earth, that I would raise
Weary forehead in thy praise,
(Weary, that I cannot go
Farther from thy region low.)
If were struck no richer meanings
From thee than thyself The leanings
Of the close trees o'er the brim
Of a sunshine-haunted stream,
Have a sound beneath their leaves,

Not of wind, not of wind,
Which the poet's voice achieves
The faint mountains heaped behind,
Have a falling on their tops,
Not of dew, not of dew,
Which the poet's fancy drops
Viewless things his eyes can view,
Driftings of his dream do light
All the skies by day and night,
And the seas that deepest roll,
Carry murmurs of his soul
Earth, I praise thee! I praise thou *me*!
God perfecteth His creation
With this recipient poet-passion,
And makes the beautiful to be
I praise thee, O beloved sign,
From the God-soul unto mine!
Praise me, that I cast on thee
The cunning sweet interpretation,
The help and glory and dilation
Of mine immortality!"

IX

There was silence None did dare
To use again the spoken air
Of that far-charming voice, until
A Christian resting on the hill,
With a thoughtful smile subdued
(Seeming learnt in solitude)

Which a weeper might have viewed
Without new tears, did softly say,
And looked up unto heaven alway
While he praised the Earth—

"O Earth,

I count the praises thou art worth,
By thy waves that move aloud,
By thy hills against the cloud,
By thy valleys warm and green,
By the copses' elms between,
By their birds which, like a sprite
Scattered, through a strong delight,
Into fragments musical,
Stir and sing in every bush,
By thy silver founts that fall,
As if to entice the stars at night
To thine heart, by grass and rush,
And little weeds the children pull,
Mistook for flowers!

—Oh, beautiful
Art thou, Earth, albeit worse
Than in Heaven is called good!
Good to us, that we may know
Meekly from thy good to go,
While the holy, crying Blood
Puts its music kind and low,
'Twixt such ears as are not dull,
And thine ancient curse!

X

"Praised be the mosses soft
In thy forest pathways oft,
And the thorns, which make us think
Of the thornless river-brink,

Where the ransomed tread!
Praised be thy sunny gleams,
And the storm, that worketh dreams
Of calm unfinished!

Praised be thine active days,
And thy night-time's solemn need,
When in God's dear book we read,
'No night shall be therein'

Praised be thy dwellings warm,
By household faggot's cheerful blaze,
Where, to hear of pardoned sin,
Pauseth oft the merry din,
Save the babe's upon the arm,
Who croweth to the crackling wood.
Yea,—and better understood,
Praised be thy dwellings cold,
Hid beneath the churchyard mould,
Where the bodies of the saints,
Separate from earthly taints,
Lie asleep, in blessing bound,
Waiting for the trumpet's sound

To free them into blessing,—none
Weeping more beneath the sun,
Though dangerous words of human
love
Be graven very near, above

XI

"Earth, we Christians praise thee
thus,
Even for the change that comes,
With a grief from thee to us!
For thy cradles and thy tombs,
For the pleasant corn and wine,
And summer-heat, and also for
The frost upon the sycamore,
And hail upon the vine!"

THE VIRGIN MARY TO THE CHILD JESUS

"But see the Virgin blest
Hath laid her babe to rest"
—MILTON'S *Hymn on the Nativity*

I

SLEEP, sleep, mine Holy One!
My flesh, my Lord!—what name?
I do not know
A name that seemeth not too high or
low,
Too far from me or Heaven
My Jesus, *that* is best! that word
being given
By the majestic angel whose com-
mand
Was softly as a man's beseeching said,
When I and all the earth appeared to
stand
In the great overflow
Of light celestial from his wings and
head
Sleep, sleep, my saving One!

II

And art Thou come for saving, baby-
browed
And speechless Being—art Thou come
for saving?
The palm that grows beside our door
is bowed
By treadings of the low wind from
the south,
A restless shadow through the cham-
ber waving
Upon its bough a bird sings in the sun,
But Thou, with that close slumber on
Thy mouth,

Dost seem of wind and sun already
weary
Art come for saving, O my weary
One?

III

Perchance this sleep that shutteth
out the dreary
Earth-sounds and motions, opens on
Thy soul
High dreams on fire with God;
High songs that make the pathways
where they roll
More bright than stars do theirs;
and visions new
Of Thine eternal Nature's old abode.
Suffer this mother's kiss,
Best thing that earthly is,
To glide the music and the glory
through,
Nor narrow in Thy dream the broad
upliftings
Of any seraph wing!
Thus, noiseless, thus Sleep, sleep,
my dreaming One!

IV

The slumber of His lips meseems to run
Through *my* lips to mine heart, to
all its shiftings
Of sensual life, bringing contrarious-
ness
In a great calm I feel, I could lie
down
As Moses did, and die,¹—and then
live most
I am 'ware of you, heavenly Presences,
That stand with your peculiar light
unlost,—
Each forehead with a high thought
for a crown,
Unsunned i' the sunshine! I am
'ware Ye throw
No shade against the wall! How
motionless
Ye round me with your living statuary,
While through your whiteness, in and
outwardly,
Continual thoughts of God appear to
go,
Like light's soul in itself! I bear, I
bear,
To look upon the dropt lids of your
eyes,

¹ It is a Jewish tradition that Moses died of
the kisses of God's lips

Though their external shining testifies
To that beatitude within which were
Enough to blast an eagle at his sun
I fall not on my sad clay face before
ye,—

I look on His, I know
My spirit which dilateth with the woe
Of His mortality,
May well contain your glory
Yea, drop your lids more low —
Ye are but fellow-worshippers with
me!

Sleep, sleep, my worshipped One!

v

We sate among the stalls at Bethle-
hem

The dumb line from their fodder
turning them,

Softened their horned faces

To almost human gazes

Toward the newly Born

The simple shepherds from the star-
lit brooks

Brought visionary looks,

As yet in their astounded hearing rung

The strange, sweet angel-tongue

The Magi of the East, in sandals worn,

Knelt reverent, sweeping round,

With long pale beards, their gifts
upon the ground,—

The incense, myrrh and gold

These baby hands were impotent to
hold

So, let all earthlies and celestials wait
Upon Thy royal state!

Sleep, sleep, my kingly One!

vi

I am not proud—meek angels, ye
invest

New meeknesses to hear such utter-
ance rest

On mortal lips,—“ I am not proud ”
—*not proud*!

Albert in my flesh God sent His Son,
Albert over Him my head is bowed,
As others bow before Him, still mine
heart

Bows lower than their knees O
centuries

That roll, in vision, your futurities
My future grave athwart,—

Whose murmurs seem to reach me
while I keep

Watch o'er this sleep,—

Say of me as the Heavenly said—
“ Thou art
The blestest of women! ”—blessed-
est

Not holiest, not noblest—no high
name,

Whose height misplaced may pierce
me like a shame

When I sit meek in Heaven!

vii

For me—*for me*—

God knows that I am feeble like the
rest!

I often wandered forth, more child
than maiden

Among the midnight hills of Galilee,
Whose summits looked heaven-

laden,
Listening to silence, as it seemed to be

God's voice, so soft yet strong—so
fain to press

Upon my heart as Heaven did on the
height,

And waken up its shadows by a light,
And show its vileness by a holiness

Then I knelt down as silent as the
night,

Too self-renounced for fears—
Raising my small face to the boundless
blue

Whose stars did mix and tremble in
my tears

God heard *them* falling after—with
His dew

viii

So, seeing my corruption, can I see
This Incorruptible now born of me—

This fair new Innocence no sun did
chance

To shine on (for even Adam was no
child),

Created from my nature all defiled,—
This mystery, from out mine ignor-

ance,—
Nor feel the blindness, stain, corrup-

tion, more
Than others do, or I did heretofore?—

Can hands wherein such burden
pure has been,

Not open with the cry, “ Unclean,
unclean! ”

More oft than any else beneath the
skies?

Ah King, ah Christ, ah son!

The kine, the shepherds, the abased
wise,
Did all less lowly wait
Than I, upon Thy state !—
Sleep, sleep, my kingly One !

IX

Art Thou a King, then ? Come, His
universe,
Come, crown me Him a King !
Pluck rays from all such stars as
never fling
Their light where fell a curse,
And make a crowning for this kingly
brow !—
What is my word ?—Each empyreal
star
Sits in a sphere afar
In shining ambuscade
The child-brow, crowned by
none,
Keeps its unchildlike shade
Sleep, sleep, my crownless One !

X

Unchildlike shade !—no other babe
doth wear
An aspect very sorrowful, as Thou —
No small-babe smiles, my watching
heart has seen,
To float like speech the speechless lips
between,
No dovelike cooing in the golden air,
No quick short joys of leaping baby-
hood
Alas ! our earthly good
In heaven thought evil, seems too
good for Thee
Yet sleep, my weary One !

XI

And then the drear sharp tongue of
prophecy,
With the dread sense of things which
shall be done,
Doth smite me inly, like a sword—
a sword ?
(That "smites the Shepherd")—then,
I think aloud
The words "despised,"—"rejected,"
—every word
Recoiling into darkness as I view
The DARLING on my knee
Bright angels,—move not !—lest ye
stir the cloud
Betwixt my soul and His futurity !

I must not die, with mother's work
to do,
And could not live—and see

XII

It is enough to bear
This image still and fair—
This holier in sleep,
Than a saint at prayer
This aspect of a child
Who never sinned or smiled—
This Presence in an infant's
face
This sadness most like love,
This love than love more deep,
This weakness like omnipotence
It is so strong to move !
Awful is this watching place,
Awful what I see from hence—
A king, without regalia,
A God, without the thunder,
A child, without the heart for
play,
Ay, a Creator rent asunder
From His first glory and cast
away
On His own world, for me alone
To hold in hands created, crying—
SON !

XIII

That tear fell not on THEE
Beloved yet Thou stirrest in Thy
slumber !
THOU, stirring not for glad sounds
out of number
Which through the vibratory palm
trees run
From summer wind and bird,
So quickly hast Thou heard
A tear fall silently ?—
Wak'st Thou, O loving One ?

TO BETTINE,

THE CHILD-FRIEND OF GOETHE

"I have the second sight, Goethe!"—*Letters
of a Child*

I

BETTINE, friend of Goethe,
Hadst thou the second sight—
Upturning worship and delight
With such a loving duty
To his grand face, as women will
The childhood 'neath thine eyelids
still ?

II

Before his shine to doom thee
Using the same child's smile
That heaven and earth, beheld ere-
while

For the first time, won from thee
Ere star and flower grew dim and
dead,
Save at his feet and o'er his head

III

Digging thine heart and throwing
Away its childhood's gold,
That so its woman-depth might hold
His spirit's overflowing
For surging souls, no worlds can
bound,
Their channel in the heart have
found

IV

O child, to change appointed,
Thou hadst not second sight !
What eyes the future view aright,
Unless by tears anointed ?
Yea, only tears themselves can show
The burning ones that have to flow

V

O woman, deeply loving,
Thou hadst not second sight !
The star is very high and bright,
And none can see it moving
Love looks around, below, above,
Yet all his prophecy is—love

VI

The bird thy childhood's playing
Sent onward o'er the sea,
Thy dove of hope, came back to thee
Without a leaf Art laying
Its wet cold wing, no sun can dry,
Still in thy bosom, secretly ?

VII

Our Goethe's friend Bettine,
I have the second sight !
The stone upon his grave is white,
The funeral stone between ye,
And in thy mirror thou hast viewed
Some change as hardly understood

VIII

Where's childhood ? where is
Goethe ?
The tears are in thine eyes
Nay, thou shalt yet reorganise
Thy maidenhood of beauty

In his own glory, which is smooth
Of wrinkles, and sublime in youth

IX

The poet's arms have wound thee,
He breathes upon thy brow,
He lifts thee upward in the glow
Of his great genius round thee,—
The childlike poet undehiled
Preserving evermore THE CHILD

MAN AND NATURE

A SAD man on a summer day
Did look upon the earth and say—
" Purple cloud the hill-top binding,
Folded hills the valleys wind in,
Valleys, with fresh streams among
you,—
Streams, with bosky trees along you —
Trees, with many birds and blossoms,—
Birds, with music-trembling bosoms,—
Blossoms, dropping dew that wreathes
you,
To your fellow flowers beneath you,—
Flowers, that constellate on earth,—
Earth, that shakest to the muth
Of the merry Titan ocean,
All his shining hair in motion !
Why am I thus the only one
Who can be dark beneath the sun ? "

But when the summer day was past,
He looked to heaven, and smiled at
last,
Self-answered so—

" Because, O cloud,
Pressing with thy crumpled shroud
Heavily on mountain top,—
Hills that almost seem to drop,
Stricken with a misty death,
To the valleys underneath,—
Valleys, sighing with the torrent,—
Waters, streaked with branches hor-
rent,—
Branchless trees, that shake your head
Wildly o'er your blossoms spread
Where the common flowers are found,—
Flowers, with foreheads to the
ground,—
Ground, that shrieketh while the sea
With his iron smiteth thee—
I am, besides, the only one
Who can be bright *without* the sun "

A SEA-SIDE WALK

I

We walked beside the sea,
 After a day which perished silently
 Of its own glory—like the Princess
 weird
 Who, combating the Genius, scorched
 and seared,
 Uttered with burning breath, "Ho !
 victory !"
 And sank adown, an heap of ashes
 pale,
 So runs the Arab tale

II

The sky above us showed
 A universal and unmoving cloud,
 On which the cliffs permitted us to
 see
 Only the outline of their majesty,
 As master-minds when gazed at by
 the crowd !
 And, shining with a gloom, the water
 grey
 Swang in its moon-taught way

III

Nor moon nor stars were out
 They did not dare to tread so soon
 about,
 Though trembling, in the footsteps of
 the sun
 The light was neither night's nor
 days, but one
 Which, life-like, had a beauty in its
 doubt,
 And Silence's impassioned breathings
 round
 Seemed wandering into sound

IV

O solemn-beating heart
 Of nature ! I have knowledge that
 thou art
 Bound unto man's by cords he cannot
 sever—
 And, what time they are slackened by
 him ever
 So to attest his own supernal part,
 Still runneth thy vibration fast and
 strong
 The slackened cord along

V

For though we never spoke
 Of the grey water and the shaded
 rock,—

Dark wave and stone unconsciously
 were fused
 Into the plaintive speaking that we
 used,
 Of absent friends and memories
 unforsook,
 And, had we seen each other's face,
 we had
 Seen haply, each was sad

THE SEA-MEW

AFFECTIONATELY INSCRIBED TO M E H

I

How joyously the young sea-mew
 Lay dreaming on the waters blue,
 Whereon our little bark had thrown
 A forward shade, the only one,
 (But shadows ever man pursue)

II

Familiar with the waves and free,
 As if their own white foam were he,
 His heart, upon the heart of ocean,
 Lay learning all its mystic motion
 And throbbing to the throbbing sea,

III

And such a brightness in his eye,
 As if the ocean and the sky
 Within him had lit up and nurst
 A soul, God gave him not at first,
 To comprehend their majesty

IV

We were not cruel, yet did sunder
 His white wing from the blue waves
 under,
 And bound it, while his fearless eyes
 Shone up to ours in calm surprise,
 As deeming us some ocean wonder !

V

We bore our ocean bird unto
 A grassy place, where he might view
 The flowers that curtsy to the bees,
 The waving of the tall green trees,
 The falling of the silver dew

VI

But flowers of earth were pale to him
 Who had seen the rainbow fishes
 swim,
 And when earth's dew around him lay,
 He thought of ocean's winged spray,
 And his eye waxed sad and dim

VII

The green trees round him only made
A prison with their darksome shade
And drooped his wing, and mourned
he
For his own boundless glittering sea—
Albert he knew not they could fade

VIII

Then One her gladsome face did bring,
Her gentle voice's murmuring,
In ocean's stead his heart to move,
And teach him what was human love—
He thought it a strange, mournful
thing

IX

He lay down in his grief to die
(First looking to the sea-like sky,
That hath no waves!), because, alas!
Our human touch did on him pass,
And with our touch, our agony

FELICIA HEMANS

TOL E L, REFERRING TO HER MONODY
ON THAT POETESS

I

THOU bay-crowned living One that
o'er the bay-crowned Dead art
bowing,
And, o'er the shadeless moveless brow
the vital shadow throwing,
And o'er the sighless songless lips
the wail and music wedding,
Dropping above the tranquil eyes,
the tears not of their shedding!—

II

Take music from the silent Dead,
whose meaning is completer,
Reserve thy tears for living brows
where all such tears are meeter,
And leave the violets in the grass to
brighten where thou treadest!
No flowers for her! no need of flowers
—albeit "bring flowers," thou
saigest

III

Yes, flowers, to crown the "cup and
lute!" since both may come to
breaking
Or flowers, to greet the "bride!"
the heart's own beating works its
aching

Or flowers, to soothe the "captive's,"
sight, from earth's free bosom
gathered,
Reminding of his earthly hope, then
withering as it withered!

IV

But bring not near her solemn corse,
the type of human seeming!
Lay only dust's stern vanity upon the
dust undreaming!
And while the calm perpetual stars
shall look upon it solely,
Her sphered soul shall look on *them*,
with eyes more bright and holy

V

Nor mourn, O living One, because her
part in life was mourning
Would she have lost the poet's fire for
anguish of the burning?—
The minstrel harp, for the strained
string? the tripod, for the afflicted
Woe? or the vision, for those tears in
which it shone dilated?

VI

Perhaps she shuddered while the
world's cold hand her brow was
wreathing,
But never wronged that mystic
breath which breathed in all her
breathing,
Which drew from rocky earth and
man, abstractions high and
moving—
Beauty, if not the beautiful, and love,
if not the loving

VII

Such visionings have paled in sight
the Saviour she descrieth,
And little reck's *who* wreathed the brow
which on His bosom lieth
The whiteness of His innocence o'er
all her garments, flowing
There, learneth she the sweet "new
song," she will not mourn in
knowing

VIII

Be happy, crowned and living One!
and, as thy dust decayeth,
May thine own Eng. and say for thee,
what now for Her it sayeth—
"Albert softly in our ears her silver
song was ringing,

The footfall of her parting soul is
softer than her singing! "

MEMORY AND HOPE

I

BACK-LOOKING Memory
And prophet Hope both sprang from
out the ground,
One, where the flashing of Cherubic
sword
Fell sad, in Eden's ward,—
And one, from Eden earth, within the
sound
Of the four rivers lapsing pleasantly
What time the promise after curse
was said—
"Thy seed shall bruise his head "

II

Poor Memory's brain is wild,
As moonstruck by that flaming
atmosphere
When she was born Her deep eyes
shine and shone
With light that conquereth sun
And stars to wanner paleness year by
year
With odorous gums, she mixeth
things defiled,
She trampleth down earth's grasses
green and sweet,
With her far-wandering feet

III

She plucketh many flowers,
Their beauty on her bosom's coldness
killing,
She teacheth every melancholy sound
To winds and waters round,
She droppeth tears with seed where
man is tilling
The rugged soil in his exhausted
hours,
She smileth—ah me! in her smile
doth go
A mood of deeper woe!

IV

Hope tripped on out of sight,
Crowned with an Eden wreath she
saw not fade,
And went a-nodding through the
wilderness,
With brow that shone no less
Than sea-bird wings by storm more
frequent made,—

B P

Searching the treeless rock for fruits of
light,
Her fair quick feet being armed from
stones and cold,
By slippers of pure gold

V

Memory did Hope much wrong,
And, while she dreamed, her slippers
stole away,
But still she wended on with mirth
unheeding
The while her feet were bleeding,
Till Memory met her on a certain day,
And with most evil eyes did search
her long
And cruelly, whereat she sank to
ground
In a stark deadly swoond

VI

And so my Hope were slain,
Had it not been that THOU wert
standing near
O Thou, who saddest "live" to
creatures lying
In their own blood, and dying!
For Thou her forehead to Thine heart
didst rear
And make its silent pulses sing again,—
Pouring a new light o'er her dark-
ened eyne,
With tender tears from Thine!

VII

Therefore my Hope arose
From out her swoond and gazed
upon Thy face,
And, meeting there that soft sub-
duing look
Which Peter's spirit shook,
Sank downward in a rapture to em-
brace
Thy pierced hands and feet with
kisses close,
And prayed Thee to assist her ever-
more
To "reach the things before "

VIII

Then gavest Thou the smile
Whence angel-wings thrill quick like
summer lightning
Vouchsafing rest beside Thee, where
she never
From Love and Faith may
sever,—

K

Whereat the Eden crown she saw not
whitening,
A time ago, though whitening all the
while,
Reddened with life, to hear the Voice
which talked
To Adam as he walked

THE SLEEP

"He giveth His beloved sleep"
PSALM CXXV 2

I

Of all the thoughts of God that are
Borne inward unto souls afar,
Along the Psalmist's music deep,
Now tell me if that any is,
For gift or grace, surpassing this—
"He giveth His beloved, sleep"

II

What would we give to our beloved?
The hero's heart, to be unmoved,
The poet's star-tuned harp, to sweep,
The patriot's voice, to teach and
rouse,
The monarch's crown, to light the
brows?—

"He giveth His beloved, sleep"

III

What do we give to our beloved?
A little faith, all undisproved,
A little dust, to overweep
And bitter memories to make
The whole earth blasted for our
sake

"He giveth His beloved, sleep"

IV

"Sleep soft, beloved!" we sometimes
say,
But have no tune to charm away
Sad dreams that through the eyelids
creep
But never doleful dream again
Shall break the happy slumber when
"He giveth His beloved, sleep"

V

O earth, so full of dreary noises!
O men, with wailing in your voices!
O delved gold, the wailers heap!
O strife, O curse, that o'er it fall!
God strikes a silence through you all,
And "giveth His beloved, sleep"

VI

His dews drop mutely on the hill,
His cloud above it saileth still,

Though on its slope men sow and
reap
More softly than the dew is shed,
Or cloud is floated overhead,
"He giveth His beloved, sleep"

VII

Yea, men may wonder while they scan
A living, thinking, feeling man
Confirmed in such a rest to keep,
But angels say—and through the word
I think their happy smile is heard—
"He giveth His beloved, sleep"

VIII

For me, my heart that erst did go
Most like a tired child at a show,
That sees through tears the jugglers
leap—
Would now its wearied vision close,
Would childlike on His love repose,
Who "giveth His beloved, sleep!"

IX

And, friends, dear friends,—when it
shall be
That this low breath is gone from me,
And round my bier ye come to weep,
Let one, most loving of you all,
Say, "Not a tear must o'er her fall—
He giveth His beloved, sleep"

MY DOVES

"O Weisheit! Du red'st wie eine Taube!"
GOETHE

My little doves have left a nest
Upon an Indian tree,
Whose leaves fantastic take their
rest
Or motion from the sea
For, ever there, the sea-winds go
With sunlit paces to and fro
The tropic flowers looked up to it,
The tropic stars looked down,
And there my little doves did sit,
With feathers softly brown,
And glittering eyes that showed their
right
To general Nature's deep delight
And God them taught, at every close
Of murmuring waves beyond,
And green leaves round to interpose
Their choral voices fond,
Interpreting that love must be
The meaning of the earth and sea
Fit ministers! Of living loves,
Theirs hath the calmest fashion,

Their living voice the likeliest moves
To lifeless intonation,—
The lovely monotone of springs
And winds and such insensate
things

My little doves were ta'en away
From that glad nest of theirs,
Across an ocean rolling grey,
And tempest-clouded airs
My little doves—who lately knew
The sky and wave by warmth and
blue!

And now, within the city prison,
In mist and chillness pent,
With sudden upward look they listen
For sounds of past content—
For lapse of water, swell of breeze,
Or nut-fruit falling from the trees

The stir without the glow of passion—
The triumph of the mart—
The gold and silver as they clash on
Man's cold metallic heart—
The roar of wheels, the cry for
bread,—

These only sounds are heard instead
Yet still, as on my human hand
Their fearless heads they lean,
And almost seem to understand
What human musings mean—
(Their eyes, with such a plaintive
shine,
Are fastened upwardly to mine!)

Soft falls their chant, as on the nest
Beneath the sunny zone,
For love that stirred it in their breast
Has not aweary grown,
And, 'neath the city's shade can keep
The well of music clear and deep
And love that keeps the music, fills
With pastoral memories
All echoes from out the hills,
All droppings from the skies,
All flowings from the wave and wind,
Remembered in their chant, I find

So teach ye me the wisest part,
My little doves! to move
Along the city-ways with heart
Assured by holy love,
And vocal with such songs as own
A fountain to the world unknown

'Twas hard to sing by Babel's stream—
More hard, in Babel's street!

But if the soulless creatures deem
Their music not unmeet
For sunless walls—let us begin,
Who wear immortal wings within!

To me, fair memories belong
Of scenes that used to bless,
For no regret, but present song,
And lasting thankfulness,
And very soon to break away,
Like types, in purer things than they

I will have hopes that cannot fade,
For flowers the valley yields
I will have humble thoughts, instead
Of silent, dewy fields
My spirit and my God shall be
My seaward hill, my boundless sea!

THE LITTLE FRIEND

WRITTEN IN THE BOOK WHICH SHE
MADE AND SENT TO ME

—το δ' ἦδη ἐξ οφθαλμῶν ἀπεληλυθεν
MARCUS ANTONINUS

THE book thou givest, dear as such,
Shall bear thy dearer name,
And many a word the leaves shall
touch,

For thee who form'dst the same!
And on them, many a thought shall
grow

'Neath memory's rain and sun,
Of thee, glad child, who dost not
know

That thought and pain are one!

Yes! thoughts of thee, who satest oft,
A while since, at my side—

So wild to tame—to move so soft,
So very hard to chide

The childish vision at thine heart,
The person on the knee,

The wandering looks which *would*
depart,

Like gulls, across the sea!

The laughter, which no half-belief

In wrath could all suppress,
The falling tears, which looked like
grief,

And were but gentleness
The fancies sent, for bliss, abroad,
As Eden's were not done—

Mistaking still the cherub's sword
For shining of the sun!

The sportive speech with wisdom in't—
The question strange and bold—

The childish fingers in the print
Of God's creative hold
The praying words in whispers said,
The sin with sobs confest,
The leaning of the young meek head
Upon the Saviour's breast !

The gentle consciousness of praise,
With hues that went and came
The brighter blush, a word could raise,
Were *that*—a father's name !
The shadow on thy smile for each
That on his face could fall !
So quick hath love been, *thee* to teach,
What soon it teacheth all

Sit still as erst beside his feet !
The future days are dim,—
But those will seem to thee most
sweet

Which keep thee nearest *him* !
Sit at his feet in quiet mirth,
And let him see arise
A clearer sun and greener earth
Within thy loving eyes !—

Ah, loving eyes ! that used to lift
Your childhood to my face—
That leave a memory on the gift
I look on in your place—
May bright-eyed hosts your guar-
dians be

From all but thankful tears,—
While, brightly as ye turned on *me*,
Ye meet th' advancing years !

THE STUDENT

Τι οὖν τούτο πρὸς σε, καὶ οὐδὲν λέγω
ὅτι πρὸς τὸν τεθνηκότα, ἀλλὰ πρὸς τὸν
ζῶντα, τι ὁ ἐπαινος

MARCUS ANTONINUS

"My midnight lamp is weary as my
soul,
And, being unimmortal, has gone out
And now alone yon moony lamp of
heaven,
Which God lit and not man, illum-
inates
These volumes, others wrote in wear-
iness
As I have read them, and this cheek
and brow,
Whose paleness, burnèd in with heats
of thought,
Would make an angel smile to see
how ill

Clay thrust from Paradise consorts
with mind—
If angels could, like men, smile
bitterly

"Yet, must my brow be paler ! I
have vowed

To clip it with the crown which can-
not fade,

When *it* is faded Not in vain ye cry,
O glorious voices that survive the
tongues

From whence was drawn your sepa-
rate sovereignty—

For I would reign beside you ! I
would melt

The golden treasures of my health
and life

Into that name ! My lips are
vowed apart

From cheerful words, mine ears,
from pleasant sounds,

Mine eyes, from sights God made so
beautiful,—

My feet, from wanderings under
shady trees,

Mine hands, from clasping of dear-
loving friends —

My very heart, from feelings which
move soft !

Vowed am I from the day's delight-
someness,

And dreams of night ! and when the
house is dumb

In sleep, which is the pause 'twixt
life and life,

I live and waken thus, and pluck
away

Slumber's sleek poppies from my
pained lids—

Goading my mind with thongs
wrought by herself,

To toil and struggle along this
mountain-path

Which hath no mountain-airs,
until she sweat

Like Adam's brow, and gasp, and
rend away

In agony, her garment of the flesh ! "

And so his midnight lamp was lit anew,
And burned till morning But his
lamp of life

Till morning burned not ! He was
found embraced

Close, cold, and stiff, by Death's com-
pelling sleep,

His breast and brow supported on a
page

Charactered over with a praise of *fame*,
Of its divineness and beatitude—

Words which had often caused that
heart to throb,

That cheek to burn, though silent
lay they now,

Without a single beating in the pulse,
And all the fever gone!

I saw a bay
Spring verdant from a newly-fash-
ioned grave

The grass upon the grave was ver-
dant,

That being watered by the eyes of
One

Who bore not to look up toward the
tree!

Others looked on it—some, with
passing glance,

Because the light wind stirrèd in its
leaves,

And some, with sudden lighting of
the soul

In admiration's ecstasy!—Ay! some
Did wag their heads like oracles, and

say,
" 'Tis very well!"—but none remem-
bered

The heart which housed the root,
except that ONE

Whose sight was lost in weeping!

Is it thus,
Ambition, idol of the intellect?

Shall we drink aconite, alone to use
Thy golden bowl? and sleep our-
selves to death—

To dream thy visions about life? O
Power

Thou art a very feebleness!—before
Thy clayey feet we bend our knees of
clay

And round thy senseless brow bind
diadems

With paralytic hands, and shout
"A god!"

With voices mortal-hoarse! Who
can discern

Th' infirmities they share in? Being
blind,

We cannot see thy blindness being
weak,

We cannot feel thy weakness being
low,

We cannot mete thy baseness being
unwise

We cannot understand thy idiocy!

THE EXILE'S RETURN

I

WHEN from thee, weeping, I re-
moved,

And from my land for years,
I thought not to return, Beloved,

With those same parting tears
I come again to hill and lea,

Weeping for thee

II

I clasped thine hand when standing
last

Upon the shore in sight

The land is green, the ship is fast,
I shall be there to-night!

I shall be there—no longer we—
No more with thee

III

Had I beheld thee dead and still,
I might more clearly know,

How heart of thine could turn as
chill

As hearts by nature so,
How change could touch the false-
hood-free

And changeless *thee*!

IV

But now thy tender looks last-seen
Within my soul remain,

'Tis hard to think that *they* have
been,

To be no more again—
That I shall vainly wait—ah me!

A word from thee

V

I could not bear to look upon
That mound of funeral clay,

Where one sweet voice is silence,—one
Æthereal brow decay,

Where all thy mortal I might see,
But never thee,

VI

For thou art where all friends are gone,
Whose parting pain is o'er

And I, who love and weep alone,
Where thou wilt weep no more,

Weep bitterly and selfishly,
For *me*, not *thee*

VII

I know Beloved, thou canst not know
That I endure this pain !
For saints in Heaven, the Scriptures
show,
Can never grieve again—
And grief, once known for mine,
would be
Still shared by thee !

A SONG AGAINST SINGING

TO E J H

I

THEY bid me sing to thee
Thou golden-haired, and silver-
voiced child,
With lips by no worse sigh than
sleep's, defiled,
With eyes unknowing how tears dim
the sight,
With feet all trembling at the new
delight
Treaders of earth to be !

II

Ah no ! the lark may bring
A song to thee from out the morning
cloud,
The merry river from its lilies bowed,
The brisk rain from the trees, the
lucky wind,
That half doth make its music, half
doth find,—
But I—I may not sing

III

How could I think it right,
New-comer on our earth as, Sweet,
thou art,
To bring a verse from out an human
heart,
Made heavy with accumulated tears,
And cross with such amount of weary
years,
Thy day-sum of delight ?

IV

E'en if the verse were said,
Thou, who wouldst clap thy tiny
hands to hear
The wind or rain, gay bird or river
clear,
Wouldst, at that sound of sad humani-
ties,
Upturn thy bright uncomprehending
eyes
And bid me play instead

V

Therefore no song of mine !
But prayer in place of singing ! prayer
that would
Commend thee to the new-creating
God,
Whose gift is childhood's heart
without its stain
Of weakness, ignorance, and chang-
ing vain—
That gift of God be thine !

VI

So wilt thou aye be young,
In lovelier childhood than thy shin-
ing brow
And pretty winning accents make
thee now !
Yea, sweeter than this scarce arti-
culate sound
(How sweet !) of "father," "mother,"
shall be found
The ABBA on thy tongue

VII

And so, as years shall chase
Each other's shadows, thou wilt less
resemble
Thy fellows of the earth who toil and
tremble,
Than him thou seest not, thine angel
bold
Yet meek, whose ever lifted eyes
behold
The Ever-loving's face

STANZAS

I MAY sing, but minstrel's singing
Ever ceaseth with his playing
I may smile, but time is bringing
Thoughts for smiles to wear away in
I may view thee, mutely loving,
But *shall* view thee so in dying !
I may sigh, but life's removing,
And with breathing endeth sighing !
Be it so !

When no song of mine comes near
thee,
Will its memory fail to soften ?
When no smile of mine can cheer thee,
Will thy smile be used as often ?
When my looks the darkness bound-
eth,
Will thine own be lighted after ?
When my sigh no longer soundeth,
Wilt thou list another's laughter ?
Be it so !

THE YOUNG QUEEN

"This awful responsibility is imposed upon me so suddenly and at so early a period of my life, that I should feel myself utterly oppressed by the burden, were I not sustained by the hope that Divine Providence, Which has called me to this work will give me strength for the performance of it."

The Queen's Declaration on Council

THE shroud is yet unspread
To wrap our crowned dead,
His soul hath scarcely hearkened for
the thrilling word of doom,
And Death that makes serene
Ev'n brows where crowns have
been,
Hath scarcely time to meeten his, for
silence of the tomb

St Paul's king-dirging note
The city's heart hath smote—
The city's heart is struck with thought
more solemn than the tone!
A shadow sweeps apace
Before the nation's face,
Confusing in a shapeless blot the
sepulchre and throne

The palace sounds with wail—
The courtly dames are pale—
A widow o'er the purple bows, and
weeps its splendour dim
And we who hold the boon,
A king for freedom won,
Do feel eternity rise up between our
thanks and him

And while all things express
All glory's nothingness,
A royal maiden treadeth firm where
that departed trod!

The deathly scented crown
Weighs her shining ringlets
down,
But calm she lifts her trusting face,
and calleth upon God

Her thoughts are deep within
her
No outward pageants win her
From memories that in her soul are
rolling wave on wave—
Her palace walls enring
The dust that was a king—
And very cold beneath her feet, she
feels her father's grave

And One, as fair as she,
Can scarce forgotten be,—

Who clasped a little infant dead, for
all a kingdom's worth!

The mourned, blessed One,
Who views Jehovah's throne,
Aye smiling to the angels, that she
lost a throne on earth

Perhaps our youthful Queen
Remembers what has been—
Her childhood's rest by loving heart,
and sport on grassy sod—
Alas! can others wear
A mother's heart for her?
But calm she lifts her trusting face,
and calleth upon God

Yea! call on God, thou maiden
Of spirit nobly laden,
And leave such happy days behind,
for happy-making years!
A nation looks to thee
For steadfast sympathy
Make room within thy bright clear
eyes, for all its gathered tears

And so the grateful isles
Shall give thee back their
smiles,
And as thy mother joys in thee, in
them shalt thou rejoice,
Rejoice to meekly bow
A somewhat paler brow
While the King of Kings shall bless
thee by the British people's
voice!

VICTORIA'S TEARS

"Hark! the reiterated clangour sounds!
Now murmurs, like the sea or like the storm,
Or like the flames on forests, move and mount
From rank to rank, and loud and louder roll,
Till all the people is one vast applause!"

LANDOR'S GEBIR

"O MAIDEN! heir of kings!
A king has left his place!
The majesty of Death has swept
All other from his face!
And thou upon thy mother's breast
No longer lean adown,
But take the glory for the rest,
And rule the land that loves thee
best!"

She heard and wept—
She wept, to wear a crown!
They decked her courtly halls,
They reined her hundred steeds,
They shouted at her palace gate,
"A noble Queen succeeds!"

Her name has stirred the mountain's
sleep,

Her praise has filled the town !
And mourners God had stricken deep,
Looked hearkening up, and did not
weep

Alone she wept,
Who wept, to wear a crown !

She saw no purples shine,
For tears had dimmed her eyes,
She only knew her childhood's
flowers

Were happier pageantries !
And while her heralds played the part,
For million shouts to drown—
" God save the Queen " from hill to
mart,—

She heard through all her beating
heart,

And turned and wept—
She wept, to wear a crown !

God save thee, weeping Queen !
Thou shalt be well beloved !
The tyrant's sceptre cannot move,
As those pure tears have moved !
The nature in thine eyes we see
That tyrants cannot own—
The love that guardeth liberties !
Strange blessing on the nation lies,
Whose Sovereign wept—
Yea ! wept, to wear its crown !

God bless thee, weeping Queen,
With blessing more divine !
And fill with happier love than earth's,
That tender heart of thine !
That when the thrones of earth
shall be
As low as graves brought down,
A pierced hand may give to thee
The crown which angels shout to see !
Thou wilt not weep,
To wear that heavenly crown !

VANITIES

" From fading things, fond men, lift your desire "
DRUMMOND

COULD ye be very blest in hearkening
Youth's often danced-to melodies—
Hearing it piped, the midnight dar-
kening
Doth come to show the starry skies,—
To freshen garden flowers, the rain ?
It is in vain, it is in vain !

Could ye be very blest in urging
A captive nation's strength to thunder
Out into foam, and with its surging
The Xerxean fetters break asunder ?
The storm is cruel as the chain !
It is in vain, it is in vain !

Could ye be very blest in paling
Your brows with studious nights and
days,
When like your lamps your life is
failing,
And sighs, not breath, are wrought
from praise ?
Your tombs, not ye, that praise
retain—
It is in vain, it is in vain !

Yea ! but ye *could* be very blest,
If some ye nearest love were nearest !
Must *they* not love when loved best ?
Must *ye* not happiest love when
dearest ?

Alas !—how hard to feel again,
It is in vain, it is in vain !

For those ye love are not unsighing,—
They are unchanging least of all
And ye the loved—ah ! no denying,
Will leave your lips beneath the pall,
When passion'd ones have o'er it
sain—

" It is in vain, it is in vain ! "

BEREAVEMENT

WHEN some Beloveds, 'neath whose
eyelids lay
The sweet lights of my childhood,
one by one
Did leave me dark before the natural
sun,
And I astonished fell, and could not
pray,—
A thought within me to myself did say,
" Is God less God, that *thou* art left
undone ?
Rise, worship, bless Him ! in this
sackcloth spun
As in that purple ! "—But I answered
nay !
What child his filial heart in words can
loose,
If he behold his tender father raise
The hand that chastens sorely ? Can
he choose
But sob in silence with an upward
gaze ?—

And *my* great Father, thinking fit to
bruise,
Discerns in speechless tears, both
prayer and praise

CONSOLATION

ALL are not taken ! there are left
behind
Living Beloveds, tender looks to bring,
And make the daylight still a happy
thing
And tender voices, to make soft the
wind
But if it were not so—if I could find
No love in all the world for comfort-
ing,
Nor any path but hollowly did ring,
Where "dust to dust" the love from
life disjoined—
And if, before those sepulchres un-
moving
I stood alone (as some forsaken lamb
Goes bleating up the moors in weary
dearth)
Crying, "Where are ye, O my loved
and loving ?"
I know a Voice would sound, "Daugh-
ter, I AM
Can I suffice for HEAVEN, and not for
earth ?"

TO MARY RUSSELL MITFORD
IN HER GARDEN

WHAT time I lay these rhymes anear
thy feet,
Benignant friend ! I will not proudly
say
As better poets use, "These *flowers* I
lay,"
Because I would not wrong thy roses
sweet,
By spoiling so their name And yet,
repeat
Thou, overleaning them this spring-
time day,
With heart as open to love as theirs
to May,—
"Low-rooted verse may reach some
heavenly heat,
Even like my blossoms, if as nature-
true,
Though not as precious" Thou art
unperplexed,
Dear friend, in whose dear writings
drops the dew

And blow the natural airs,—thou, who
art next
To nature's self in cheering the world's
view —
To preach a sermon on so known a
text !

A SUPPLICATION FOR LOVE

HYMN I

"The Lord Jesus, although gone to the Father,
and we see Him no more is still present with
His Church, and in His heavenly glory expends
upon her as intense a love as in the agony of the
garden, and the crucifixion of the tree Those
eyes that wept, still gaze upon her"—*Recalled
words of an extempore Discourse, preached at
Sidmouth, 1833*

God, namèd Love, Whose fount Thou
art,
Thy crownless Church before Thee
stands,
With too much hating in her heart,
And too much striving in her hands !

O loving Lord ! O slain for love !
Thy blood upon Thy garments
came—

Inwrap their folds our brows above,
Before we tell Thee all our shame !

"Love as I loved you," was the sound
That on Thy lips expiring sate !
Sweet words, in bitter strivings
drowned !

We hated as the worldly hate

The spear that pierced for love Thy
side,

We dared for wrathful use to crave,
And with our cruel noise denied
Its silence to Thy blood-red grave !

Ah, blood ! that speaketh more of
love

Than Abel's—could we speak like
Cain,

And grieve and scare that holy Dove,
The parting love-gift of the Slain ?

Yet, Lord, Thy wrongèd love fulfil !
Thy Church, though fallen, before
Thee stands—

Behold, the voice is Jacob's still,
Albeit the hands are Esau's hands !

Hast thou no tears, like those be-
sprent

Upon Thy Zion's ancient part ?

No moving looks, like those which
sent
Their softness through a traitor's
heart ?

No touching tale of anguish dear,
Whereby like children we may
creep,
All trembling, to each other near,
And view each other's face, and
weep ?

Oh, move us—Thou hast power to
move—

One in the one Beloved to be !
Teach us the heights and depths of
love—

Give THINE—that we may love
like THEE !

THE MEDIATOR

HYMN II

"As the greatest of all sacrifices was required,
we may be assured that no other would have
sufficed"—BORD'S *Essay on the Atonement*

How high Thou art ! our songs can
own

No music Thou couldst stoop to
hear !

But still the Son's expiring groan
Is vocal in the Father's ear

How pure Thou art ! our hands are
died

With curses, red with murder's
hue—

But HE hath stretched His hands to
hide

The sins that pierced them from
Thy view

How strong Thou art ! we tremble lest
The thunders of Thine arm be
moved—

But HE is lying on Thy breast,
And Thou must clasp Thy best
Beloved !

How kind Thou art ! Thou didst
not choose

To joy in Him for ever so,
But that embrace Thou wilt not loose
For vengeance, didst for love fore-
go !

High God, and pure, and strong, and
kind !

The low, the foul, the feeble, spare !

Thy brightness in His face we find
Behold our darkness only *there* !

THE WEEPING SAVIOUR

HYMN III

— 'tell
Whether His countenance can thee affright,
Tears in His eyes quench the amazing light"
DONNE

WHEN Jesus' friend had ceased to be
Still Jesus' heart its friendship
kept—

"Where have ye laid him ?"—
"Come and see !"

But ere His eyes could see, they
wept

Lord ! not in sepulchres alone,
Corruption's worm is rank and free,
The shroud of death our bosoms own—
The shades of sorrow ! Come and
see !

Come, Lord ! God's image cannot
shine

Where sin's funereal darkness
lowers—

Come ! turn those weeping eyes of
Thine

Upon these sinning souls of ours !

And let those eyes, with shepherd care,
Their moving watch above us keep,
Till love the strength of sorrow wear,
And as Thou weepedst, *we* may
weep !

For surely we may weep to know,
So dark and deep our spirit's stain,
That had Thy blood refused to flow,
Thy very tears had flowed in vain

THE MEASURE

HYMN IV

"He comprehended the dust of the earth in
a measure" (שֵׁלִי) —ISAIAH xl 12

"Thou givest them tears to drink in great
measure" (שֵׁלִי) —PSALM lxxxv 5 1

I

God, the Creator, with a pulseless
hand

Of unoriginated power, hath weighed
The dust of earth and tears of man,
in one

¹ I believe that the word occurs in no other
part of the Hebrew Scriptures

Measure and by one weight,—
So saith His holy book

II

Shall *we*, then, who have issued from
the dust
And there return,—shall *we*, who
toil for dust,
And wrap our winnings in this dusty
life,
Say, "No more tears, Lord God!
The measure runneth o'er"?

III

Oh, holder of the balance, laughest
Thou?
Nay, Lord! be gentler to our fool-
ishness,
For His sake who assumed our dust,
and turns
On Thee pathetic eyes
Still moistened with our tears!

IV

And teach us, O our Father, while
we weep
To look in patience upon earth and
learn—
Waiting, in that meek gesture, till at
last
- Those tearful eyes be filled
With the dry dust of death

COWPER'S GRAVE

I

It is a place where poets crowned may
feel the heart's decaying —
It is a place where happy saints may
weep amid their praying
Yet let the grief and humbleness, as
low as silence, languish!
Earth surely now may give her calm
to whom she gave her anguish

II

O poets! from a maniac's tongue, was
poured the deathless singing!
O Christians! at your cross of hope,
a hopeless hand was clinging!
O men! this man in brotherhood
your weary paths beguiling,
Groaned only while he taught you
peace, and died while ye were
smiling!

III

And now, what time ye all may read
through dimming tears his story,

How discord on the music fell, and
darkness on the glory,
And how, when, one by one, sweet
sounds and wandering lights
departed,
He wore no less a loving face because
so broken-hearted,

IV

He shall be strong to sanctify the
poet's high vocation,
And bow the meekest Christian down
in meeker adoration,
Nor ever shall he be, in praise, by
wise or good forsaken,
Named softly as the household name
of one whom God hath taken.

V

With quiet sadness and no gloom I
learn to think upon him,
With meekness that is gratefulness
to God Whose heaven hath won
him—
Who suffered once the madness-cloud,
to His own love to blind him,
But gently led the blind along where
breath and bird could find him,

VI

And wrought within his shattered
brain, such quick poetic senses,
As hills have language for, and stars,
harmonious influences!
The pulse of dew upon the grass
kept his within its number,
And silent shadows from the trees
refreshed him like a slumber

VII

Wild timid hares were drawn from
woods to share his home-caresses,
Uplooking to his human eyes with
sylvan tendernesses
The very world, by God's constraint,
from falsehood's ways removing,
Its women and its men became
beside him, true and loving

VIII

But while in blindness he remained
unconscious of the guiding,
And things provided came without
the sweet sense of providing,
He testified this solemn truth, though
frenzy desolated—
Nor man, nor nature satisfy, whom
only God created!

IX

Like a sick child that knoweth not
 his mother, while she blesses
 And drops upon his burning brow, the
 coolness of her kisses,
 That turns his fevered eyes around
 —“My mother! where’s my
 mother?”—
 As if such tender words and looks
 could come from any other!—

X

The fever gone, with leaps of heart
 he sees her bending o’er him,
 Her face all pale from watchful love,
 the unwearied love she bore him!—
 Thus, woke the poet from the dream
 his life’s long fever gave him,
 Beneath those deep pathetic Eyes,
 which closed in death to save
 him!

XI

Thus? oh, not *thus*! no type of
 earth could image that awaking,
 Wherein he scarcely heard the chant
 of seraphs, round him breaking,
 Or felt the new immortal throb of
 soul from body parted,
 But felt *those eyes alone*, and knew
 “My Saviour! not deserted!”

XII

Deserted! who hath dreamt that when
 the cross in darkness rested
 Upon the Victim’s hidden face no
 love was manifested?
 What frantic hands outstretched have
 e’er the atoning drops averted?
 What tears have washed them from
 the soul, that *one* should be
 deserted?

XIII

Deserted! God could separate from
 His own essence rather,
 And Adam’s sins *have* swept between
 the righteous Son and Father,
 Yea, once, Immanuel’s orphaned cry,
 His universe hath shaken—
 It went up single, echoless, “My God,
 I am forsaken!”

XIV

It went up from the Holy’s lips amid
 His lost creation,
 That, of the lost, no son should use
 those words of desolation,

That earth’s worst frenzies, marring
 hope, should mar not hope’s
 fruition,
 And I, on Cowper’s grave, should see
 his rapture, in a vision!

THE WEAKEST THING

I

Which is the weakest thing of all
 Mine heart can ponder?
 The sun, a little cloud can pall
 With darkness, yonder?
 The cloud, a little wind can move
 Where’er it listeth?
 The wind, a little leaf above,
 Though sere, resisteth?

II

What time that yellow leaf was green,
 My days were gladder,
 But now, whatever Spring may mean,
 I must grow sadder
 Ah me! a *leaf* with sighs can wring
 My lips asunder—
 Then is mine heart the weakest thing
 Itself can ponder?

III

Yet, Heart, when sun and cloud are
 pined,
 And drop together,
 And at a blast which is not wind,
 The forests wither,
 Thou, from the darkening deathly
 cure,
 To glory breakest,—
 The Strongest of the universe
 Guarding the weakest!

THE PET-NAME

——“the name
 Which from *THEIR* lips seemed a caress”
 Miss MITFORD’s *Dramatic Scenes*

I

I HAVE a name, a little name,
 Uncadenced for the ear,
 Unhonoured by ancestral claim
 Unsanctified by prayer and psalm
 The solemn font anear

II

It never did, to pages wove
 For gay romance, belong,
 It never dedicate did move,
 As “Sacharissa,” unto love—
 “Orinda,” unto song

III

Though I write books, it will be read
Upon the leaves of none,
And afterward, when I am dead,
Will ne'er be graved for sight or tread,
Across my funeral stone

IV

This name, whoever chance to call,
Perhaps your smile may win—
Nay, do not smile! mine eyelids fall
Over mine eyes and feel withal
The sudden tears within

V

Is there a leaf that greenly grows
Where summer meadows bloom,
But gathereth the winter snows,
And changeth to the hue of those,
If lasting till they come?

VI

Is there a word, or jest, or game,
But time encrusteth round
With sad associate thoughts the
same?
And so to me my very name
Assumes a mournful sound

VII

My brother gave that name to me
When we were children twain,—
When names acquired baptismally
Were hard to utter, as to see
That life had any pain

VIII

No shade was on us then, save one
Of chestnuts from the hill—
And through the word our laugh did
run
As part thereof! The mirth being
done,
He calls me by it still

IX

Nay, do not smile! I hear in it
What none of you can hear!
The talk upon the willow seat,
The bird and wind that did repeat
Around, our human cheer

X

I hear the birthday's noisy bliss,
My sisters' woodland glee,—
My father's praise, I did not miss,
When stooping down he cared to kiss
The poet at his knee,—

XI

And voices, which to name me, aye
Their tenderest tones were keep-
ing!—
To some I never more can say
An answer, till God wipes away
In heaven, these drops of weeping

XII

My name to me a sadness wears,
No murmurs cross my mind
Now God be thanked for these thick
tears,
Which show, of those departed years,
Sweet memories left behind!

XIII

Now God be thanked for years en-
wrought
With love which softens yet!
Now God be thanked for every thought
Which is so tender it hath caught
Earth's guerdon of regret!

XIV

The earth may sadden, not remove,
Our love divinely given,
And e'en that mortal grief shall prove
The immortality of love,
And lead us nearer Heaven

QUEEN ANNELIDA AND FALSE
ARCITE

MODERNISED FROM CHAUCER

(1841)

QUEEN ANNELIDA, AND FALSE
ARCITE

I

O THOU fierce God of armies, Mars the
red,
Who in thy frosty country callèd
Thrace,
Within thy grisly temples full of dread,
Art honoured as the patron of that
place,
With the Bellona Pallas, full of grace!
Be present, guide, sustain this song
of mine,
Beginning which, I cry toward thy
shrine

II

For deep the hope is sunken in my
mind,
In piteous-hearted English to undite
This story old, which I in Latin
find,
Of Queen Annelida and false Arcite

Since Time, whose rust can all things
fret and bite,
In fretting many a tale of equal fame,
Hath from our memory nigh de-
voured this same

III

Thy favour, Polyhymnia, also deign,
Who, in thy sisters' green Parnassian
glade,
By Helicon, not far from Cirrha's fane,
Singing with voice memorial in the
shade,
Under the laurel which can never
fade,
Now grant my ship, that some smooth
haven win her!
I follow Statius first, and then
Corinna

IV

When Theseus by a long and deathly
war
The hardy Scythian race had over-
come,
He, laurel-crownèd, in his gold-
wrought car,
Returning to his native city home,
The blissful people for his pomp make
room,
And throw their shouts up to the
stars, and bring
The general heart out for his honour-
ing

V

Before the Duke, in sign of victory,
The trumpets sound, and in his
banner large
Dilates the figure of Mars—and
men may see,
In token of glory, many a treasure
charge,
Many a bright helm, and many a
spear and targe
Many a fresh knight, and many a
blissful rout
On horse and foot, in all the field
about

VI

Hippolyte, his wife, the heroic queen
Of Scythia, conquereess though con-
querèd,
With Emily, her youthful sister shewn,
Fair in a car of gold he with him led
The ground about her car she over-
spread

With brightness from the beauty in
her face,
Which smile forth largesses of love
and grace

VII

Thus triumphing, and laurel-crowned
thus,
In all the flower of Fortune's, high
providing
I leave this noble prince this Theseus,
Toward the walls of Athens bravely
riding —
And seek to bring in, without more
abiding,
Something of that whereof I 'gan to
write
Of fair Annelida and false Arcite

VIII

Fierce Mars, who in his furious course
of ire,
The ancient wrath of Juno to fulfil,
Had set the nations' mutual hearts on
fire
In Thebes and Argos (so that each
would kill
Either with bloody spears), grew
never still—
But rushed now here, now theré,
among them both
Till each was slain by each, they were
so wroth

IX

For when Parthenopæus and Tydeus
Had perished with Hippomedon,—
also
Amphiaraus and proud Capaneus —
And when the wretched Theban
brethren two
Were slain, and King Adrastus home
did go—
So desolate stood Thebes, her halls so
bare,
That no man's love could remedy his
care

X

And when the old man, Creon, 'gan
espy
How darkly the blood royal was
brought down,
He held the city in his tyranny,
And forced the nobles of that region
To be his friends and dwell within the
town,

Till half for love of him, and half
for fear,
Those princely persons yielded, and
drew near,—

x

Among the rest the young Armenian
queen,
Annelida, was in that city living
She was as beauteous as the sun was
sheen,
Her fame to distant lands such glory
giving
That all men in the world had some
heart-striving
To look on her No woman, sooth,
can be,
Though earth is rich in fairness, fair
as she

xii

Young was this queen, but twenty
summers old,
Of middle stature, and such wondrous
beauty,
That Nature, self-delighted, did
behold
A rare work in her—while, in steadfast
duty,
Lucretia and Penelope would suit ye
With a worse model—all things
understood,
She was, in short, most perfect fair
and good

xiii

The Theban knight eke, to give all
their due,
Was young, and therewithal a lusty
knight
But he was double in love, and no-
thing true,
Ay, subtler in that craft than any
wight,
And with his cunning won this lady
bright,
So working on her simpleness of
nature,
That she him trusted above every
creature

xiv

What shall I say? She loved Arcite
so,
That if at any hour he parted from
her,
Her heart seemed ready anon to
burst in two,

For he with lowliness had overcome
her

She thought she knew the heart which
did foredoom her

But he was false, and all that soft-
ness feigning,—

I trow men need not *learn* such arts
of paining

xv

And ne'ertheless full mickle business
Had he, before he might his lady
win,—

He swore that he should die of his
distress,

His brain would madden with the
fire within!

Alas, the while! for it was ruth and
sin,

That she, sweet soul, upon his grief
should rue,

But little reckon false hearts as the
true

xvi

And she to Arcite so subjected her,
That all she did or had seemed his of
right

No creature in her house met smile
or cheer,

Further than would be pleasant to
Arcite,

There was no lack whereby she did
despite

To his least will—for hers to his was
bent,

And all things which pleased him
made her content

xvii

No kind of letter to her fair hands
came,

Touching on love, from any kind of
wight,

But him she showed it ere she burned
the same

So open was she, doing all she
might

That nothing should be hidden from
her knight,

Lest he for any untruth should up-
braid her,—

The slave of his unspoken will she
made her

xviii

He played his jealous fancies over her,
And if he heard that any other man

Spoke to her, would beseech her
straight to swear
To each word—or the speaker had
his ban,
And out of her sweet wits she almost
ran
For fear, but all was fraud and
flattery,
Since without love he feignèd jeal-
ousy

XIX

All which with so much sweetness
suffered she,
Whate'er he willed she thought the
wisest thing,
And evermore she loved him tenderly,
And did him honour as he were a
king
Her heart was wedded to him with a
ring,
So eager to be faithful and intent,
That wheresoe'er he wandered, there
it went

XX

When she would eat he stole away her
thought,
Till little thought for food, I ween,
was kept,
And when a time for rest the midnight
brought,
She always mused upon him till she
slept,—
When he was absent, secretly she
wept,
And thus lived Queen Annelida the
fair,
For false Arcite, who worked her
this despair

XXI

This false Arcite in his new-fangle-
ness,
Because so gentle were her ways and
true,
Took the less pleasure in her stead-
fastness,
And saw another lady proud and
new,
And right anon he clad him in her
hue,
I know not whether white, or red, or
green,
Betraying fair Annelida the Queen

XXII

And yet it was no thing to wonder on,
Though he were false—It is the way
of man

(Since Lamech was, who flourished
years ago),
To be in love as false as any can,
For he was the first father who began
To love two, and I trow, indeed,
that he
Invented tents as well as bigamy

XXIII

And having so betrayed her, false
Arcite
Feign'd more, that primal wrong to
justify
A vicious horse will snort besides his
bite,
And so he taunted her with treachery,
Swearing he saw thro' her duplicity,
And how she was not loving, but
false-hearted—
The perjured traitor swore thus, and
departed

XXIV

Alas, alas, what heart could suffer it,
For ruth, the story of her grief to
tell?
What thinker hath the cunning and
the wit
To image it? what hearer, strength
to dwell
A room's length off, while I rehearse
the hell
Suffered by Queen Annelida the fair
For false Arcite, who worked her this
despair?

XXV

She weepeth, waileth, swooneth
piteously,
She falleth on the earth dead as a
stone,
Her graceful limbs are cramped con-
vulsively,
She speaketh out wild, as her wits
were gone
No colour, but an ashen paleness—
none—
Touched cheek or lips, and no word
shook their white,
But "Mercy, cruel heart! mine own
Arcite!"

XXVI

Thus it continued, till she pinèd so,
And grew so weak, her feet no more
could bear
Her body, languishing in ceaseless
woe

Whereof Arcite had neither ruth nor
care—
His heart had put out new-green
shoots elsewhere,
Therefore he deigned not on her grief
to think,
And reckoned little, did she float or
sink

XXVII

His fine new lady kept him in such
narrow
Strict limit, by the bridle, at the end
O' the whip, he feared her least word
as an arrow,—
Her threatening made him, as a bow,
to bend,
And at her pleasure did he turn and
wend,
Seeing she never granted to this lover
A single grace he could sing "Ios"
over

XXVIII

She drove him forth—she scarcely
deigned to know
That he was servant to her ladyship
But, lest he should be proud, she kept
him low,
Nor paid his service from a smiling
— lip
She sent him now to land, and now to
ship
And giving him all danger to his fill,
She thereby had him at her sovereign
will

XXIX

Be taught of this, ye prudent women
all,
Warn'd by Annelida and false Arcite,
Because she chose, himself, "dear
heart" to call
And be so meek, he loved her not
aright
The nature of man's heart is to delight
In something strange—moreover
(may Heaven save
The wrong'd), the thing they cannot,
they would have

XXX

Now turn we to Annelida again,
Who pined day by day in languish-
ment
But when she saw no comfort met her
pain,
Weeping once in a woeful uncon-
straint,

B P

She set herself to fashion a com-
plaint,
Which with her own pale hand she
'gan to write,
And sent it to her lover to Arcite

THE COMPLAINT OF ANNELIDA
TO FALSE ARCITE

I

THE sword of sorrow, whetted sharp
for me
On false delight, with point of memory
Stabb'd so mine heart bliss-bere and
black of hue,
That all to dread is turn'd my dance's
glee,
My face's beauty to despondency—
For nothing it availeth to be true—
And, whosoever is so, she shall rue
Obeying love, and cleaving faithfully
Always to one, and changing for no
new

II

I ought to know it well as any wight,
For I loved one with all my heart
and might,
More than myself a hundred-thou-
sand fold,
And call'd him my heart's dear life,
my knight,
And was all his, as far as it was
right,
His gladness did my blitheness make
of old,
And in his least disease my death was
told,
Who on his side, had plighted
lovers' plight
Me, evermore, his lady and love to
hold

III

Now is he false—alas, alas!—al-
though
Unwronged! and acting such a ruth-
less part,
That with a little word he will not
deign
To bring the peace back to my mourn-
ful heart
Drawn in, and caught up by another's
art,
Right as he will, he laugheth at my
pain,
While I—I cannot my weak heart
restrain

L

From loving him—still, aye, yet
none I know
To whom of all this grief I can com-
plain

IV

Shall I complain (ah, piteous and
harsh sound !)
Unto my foe, who gave mine heart
a wound,
And still desirereth that the harm be
more ?
Now certes, if I sought the whole
earth round,
No other help, no better leech were
found !
My destiny hath shaped it so of yore—
I would not other medicine, nor yet
lore
I would be ever where I once was
bound,
And what I said, would say for ever-
more

V

Alas ! and where is gone your
gentillesse ?
Where gone your pleasant words,
your humbleness ?
Where your devotion full of reverent
fear,
Your patient loyalty, your busy
address
To me, whom once you callèd no-
thing less
Than mistress, sovereign lady, i' the
sphere
O' the world ? Ah me ! no word, no
look of cheer,
Will you vouchsafe upon my heav-
iness !
Alas your love ! I bought it all too
dear

VI

Now certes, sweet, howe'er you be
The cause so, and so causelessly,
Of this my mortal agony,
Your reason should amend the
failing !
Your friend, your true love, do you
flee,
Who never in time nor yet degree
Grieved you so may the all-know-
ing He
Save my lorn soul from future wail-
ing

VII

Because I was so plain, Arcite,
In all my doings, your delight,
Seeking in all things, where I might
In honour,—meek and kind and free ;
Therefore you do me such despite
Alas ! howe'er through cruelty
My heart with sorrow's sword you
smite,
You cannot kill its love —Ah me !

VIII

Ah, my sweet foe, why do you so
For shame ?
Think you that praise, in sooth, will
raise
Your name,
Loving anew, and being untrue
For aye ?
Thus casting down your manhood'
crown

In blame,
And working me adversity,
The same
Who loves you most—(O God, Thou
know'st !)

Always ?
Yet turn again—be fair and plain
Some day,
And then shall this, that seems amiss,
Be game,
All being forgiv'n, while yet from
heav'n

I stay

IX

Behold, dear heart, I write this to
obtain
Some knowledge, whether I should
pray or 'plain
Which way is best to force you to be
true ?
For either I must have you in my
chain,
Or you, sweet, with the death must
part us twain,
There is no mean, no other way more
new
And, that Heaven's mercy on my
soul may rue
And let you slay me outright with
this pain,
The whiteness in my cheeks may
prove to you

X

For hitherto mine own death have I
sought,

Myself I murder with my secret
thought,
In sorrow and ruth of your unkind-
nesses !
I weep, I wail, I fast—all helpeth
nought,
I flee all joy (I mean the name of
aught),
I flee all company, all mirthfulness—
Why, who can make her boast of
more distress
Than I ? To such a plight you have
me brought,
Guiltless (I need no witness) ne'erthe-
less

XI

Shall I go pray and wail my woman-
hood ?
Compared to such a deed, death's
self were good
What ! ask for mercy, and guiltless—
where's the need ?
And if I wailed my life so,—that you
would
Care nothing, is less feared than
understood
And if mine oath of love I dared to
plead
In mine excuse,—your scorn would
be its meed
Ah, love ! it giveth flowers instead of
seed—
Full long ago I might have taken heed

XII

And though I had you back to-mor-
row again,
I might as well hold April from the rain
As hold you to the vows you vowed
me last
Maker of all things, and truth's
sovereign,
Where is the truth of man, who hath
it slain,
That she who loveth him should find
him fast
As in a tempest is a rotten mast ?
Is that a *tame* beast which is ever fain
To flee us when restraint and fear are
past ?

XIII

Now mercy sweet, if I mis-say,—
Have I said aught is wrong to-day ?
I do not know—my wit's astray—
I fare as doth the song of one who
weepeth,

For now I 'plain, and now I pray—
I am so mazed, I die away—
Arcite, you have the key for aye
Of all my world, and all the good it
keepeth

XIV

And in this world there is not one
Who walketh with a sadder moan,
And bears more grief than I have
done,
And if light slumbers overcome me,
Methinks your image, in the glory
Of skyey azure, stands before me,
Re-vowing the old love you bore me,
And praying for new mercy from me

XV

Through the long night, this won-
drous sight,

Bear I,

Which haunteth still, the daylight,
till

I die

But nought of this, your heart, I wis,
Can reach
Mine eyes down-pour, they never-
more

Are dry,

While to your ruth, and eke your
truth,

I cry—

But, welladay, too far be they
To fetch

Thus destiny is holding me—

Ah, wretch !

And when I fain would break the
chain,

And try—

Faileth my wit (so weak is it)
With speech

XVI

Therefore I end thus, since my hope
is o'er—

I give all up both now and evermore,
And in the balance ne'er again will lay
My safety, nor be studious in love-lore
But like the swan who, as I heard of
yore,

Singeth life's penance on his deathly
day,

So I sing here my life and woes away,—
Ay, how you, cruel Arcite, wounded
sore,

With memory's point, your poor
Annelida.

XVII

After Annelida, the woeful queen,
 Had written in her own hand in this
 wise,
 With ghastly face, less pale than
 white, I ween,
 Shefella-swooning, then she 'gan arise,

And unto Mars voweth a sacrifice
 Within the temple, with a sorrowful
 bearing

POEMS

(1844, 1850, 1853)

A DRAMA OF EXILE

SCENE—*The outer side of the gate of Eden
 shut fast with cloud, from the depth of
 which revolves a sword of fire self-
 moved ADAM and EVE are seen in the
 distance flying along the glare*

Lucifer (alone) Rejoice in the clefts
 of Gehenna

My exiled, my host !

Earth has exiles as hopeless as when a
 Heaven's empire was lost

Through the seams of her shaken
 foundations,

Smoke up in great joy !

With the smoke of your fierce exulta-
 tions

Deform and destroy !

Smoke up with your lurid revenges,
 And darken the face

Of the white heavens, and taunt
 them with changes

From glory and grace

We in falling, while destiny strangles,
 Pull down with us all

Let them look to the rest of their
 angels !

Who's safe from a fall ?

He saves not Where's Adam ? Can
 pardon

Requicken that sod ?

Unkinged is the King of the Garden,
 The image of God

Other exiles are cast out of Eden,—
 More curse has been hurled !

Come up O my locusts and feed in
 The green of the world

Come up ! we have conquered by evil
 Good reigns not alone

I prevail now ! and, angel or devil,
 Inherit a throne !

*In sudden apparition a watch of innu-
 merable Angels, rank above rank,
 slopes up from around the gate to
 the zenith*

The ANGEL GABRIEL descends

Luc Hail Gabriel, the keeper of
 the gate !

Now that the fruit is plucked, prince
 Gabriel,

I hold that Eden is impregnable
 Under thy keeping

Gab Angel of the sin,
 Such as thou standest,—pale in the
 drear light

Which rounds the rebel's work with
 Maker's wrath,—

Thou shalt be an Idea to all souls,
 A monumental melancholy gloom
 Seen down all ages, whence to mark
 despair

And measure out the distances from
 good !

Go from us straightway

Luc Wherefore ?

Gab Lucifer,
 Thy last step in this place, trod
 sorrow up

Recoil before that sorrow, if not this
 sword

Luc Angels are in the world—
 wherefore not I ?

Exiles are in the world—wherefore
 not I ?

The cursed are in the world—where-
 fore not I ?

Gab Depart

Luc And where's the logic of
 "depart" ?

Our lady Eve had half been satisfied
 To obey her Maker, if I had not learnt
 To fix my postulate better Dost
 thou dream

Of guarding some monopoly in
 Heaven

Instead of earth ? Why, I can dream
 with thee

To the length of thy wings

Gab I do not dream
 This is not Heaven, even in a dream,
 nor earth,

As earth was once first breathed
among the stars,
Articulate glory from the mouth di-
vine,
To which the myriad spheres thrilled
audibly
Touched like a lute-string, and the
sons of God
Said AMEN, singing it I know that
this
Is earth not new created but new
cursed—
This, Eden's gate not opened but
built up
With a final cloud of sunset Do I
dream ?
Alas, not so ! this is the Eden lost
By Lucifer the serpent ! this the sword
(This sword alive with justice and
with fire !)
That smote upon the forehead,
Lucifer
The angel ! Wherefore, angel,
go—depart—
Enough is sinned and suffered
Luc By no means
Here's a brave earth to sin and suffer
on !
It holds fast still—it cracks not under
curse,
It holds, like mine immortal Pre-
sently
We'll sow it thick enough with graves
as green
Or greener, certes, than its knowledge-
tree—
We'll have the cypress for the tree
of life,
More eminent for shadow—for the
rest
We'll build it dark with towns and
pyramids,
And temples, if it please you —
we'll have feasts
And funerals also, merrymakes and
wars,
Till blood and wine shall mix and run
along
Right o'er the edges ○ And good
Gabriel,
(Ye like that word in Heaven !) I too
have strength—
Strength to behold Him and not
worship Him,
Strength to fall from Him and not
cry on Him,

Strength to be in the universe and
yet
Neither God nor His servant The
red sign
Burnt on my forehead, which you
taunt me with,
Is God's sign that it bows not unto
God,
The potter's mark upon his work, to
show
It rings well to the striker I and the
earth
Can bear more curse
Gab O miserable earth,
O ruined angel !
Luc Well ! and if it be,
I chose this ruin I elected it
Of my will, not of service What I do,
I do volitient, not obedient,
And overtop thy crown with my
despair
My sorrow crowns me Get thee
back to Heaven,
And leave me to the earth which is
mine own
In virtue of her misery, as I hers
In virtue of my ruin ! turn from both
That bright impassive, passive angel-
hood,
And spare to read us backward any
more
Of your spent hallelujahs
Gab Spirit of scorn !
I might say, of unreason ! I might say,
That who despairs, acts, that who
acts, connives
With God's relations set in time and
space,
That who elects, assumes a something
good
Which God made possible, that who
lives, obeys
The law of a Life-maker
Luc Let it pass !
No more, thou Gabriel ! What if I
stand up
And strike my brow against the
crystalline
Roofing the creatures,—shall I say
for that,
My stature is too high for me to
stand —
Henceforward I must sit ? Sit *thou*
Gab I kneel,
Luc A heavenly answer Get
thee to thy Heaven,

And leave my earth to me
Gab Through Heaven and earth
 God's will moves freely, and I
 follow it
 As colour follows light He over-
 flows
 The firmamental walls with deity,
 Therefore with love His lightnings
 go abroad,
 His pity may do so, His angels
 must,
 Whene'er He gives them charges
Luc Verily,
 I and my demons—who are spirits of
 scorn—
 Might hold this charge of standing
 with a sword
 'Twixt man and his inheritance, as
 well
 As the benignest angel of you all
Gab Thou speakest in the shadow
 of thy change
 If thou hadst gazed upon the face of
 God
 This morning for a moment, thou
 hadst known
 That only pity fitly can chastise,
 While hate avenges
Luc As it is, I know
 Something of pity When I reeled
 in Heaven,
 And my sword grew too heavy for my
 grasp,
 Stabbing through matter, which it
 could not pierce
 So much as the first shell of,—toward
 the throne,
 When I fell back, down,—staring up
 as I fell,—
 The lightnings holding open my
 scathed lids,
 And that thought of the infinite of
 God,
 Hurled after to precipitate descent,
 When countless angel faces still and
 stern
 Pressed out upon me from the level
 heavens
 Adown the abysmal spaces, and I
 fell,
 Trampled down by your stillness, and
 struck blind
 By the sight in your eyes,—'twas
 then I knew
 How ye could pity, my kind angel-
 hood!

Gab Yet, thou discredited one,
 by the truth in me
 Which God keeps in me, I would give
 away
 All—save that truth and His love
 over it,—
 To lead thee home again into the
 light,
 And hear thy voice chant with the
 morning stars
 When their rays tremble round them
 with much song
 Sung in more gladness!
Luc Sing, my Morning Star!
 Last beautiful—last heavenly—that
 I loved!
 If I could drench thy golden locks
 with tears
 What were it to this angel?
Gab What Love is!
 And now I have named God
Luc Yet Gabriel,
 By the lie in me which I keep my-
 self,
 Thou'rt a false swearer Were it
 otherwise,
 What dost thou here, vouchsafing
 tender thoughts
 To that earth-angel or earth-demon
 —which,
 Thou and I have not solved his prob-
 lem yet
 Enough to argue,—that fallen Adam
 there,—
 That red-clay and a breath! who
 must, forsooth
 Live in a new apocalypse of sense,
 With beauty and music waving in his
 trees
 And running in his rivers, to make
 glad
 His soul made perfect?—is it not for
 hope,
 A hope within thee, deeper than thy
 truth,
 Of finally conducting him and his
 To fill the vacant thrones of me and
 mine,
 Which affront Heaven with their
 vacuity?
Gab Angel, there are no vacant
 thrones in Heaven
 To suit thy empty words Glory and
 life
 Fulfil their own depletions, and if
 God

Sighed you far from Him, His next
breath drew in
A compensative splendour up the vast,
Flushing the starry arteries!
Luc With a change!
So, let the vacant thrones and gardens
too
Fill as may please you!—and be
pitiful,
As ye translate that word, to the de-
throned
And exiled, man or angel The fact
stands,—
That I, the rebel, the cast out and
down,
Am here and will not go, while
there, along
The light to which ye flash the desert
out,
Flies your adopted Adam! your red-
clay
In two kinds, both being flawed
Why, what is this?
Whose work is this? Whose hand
was in the work?
Against whose hand? In this last
strife, methinks,
I am not a fallen angel!
Gab Dost thou know
Aught of those exiles?
Luc Ay I know they have fled
Wordless all day along the wilder-
ness
I know they wear, for burden on their
backs,
The thought of a shut gate of Paradise,
And faces of the marshalled cheru-
bim
Shining against, not for them! and
I know
They dare not look in one another's
face—
As if each were a cherub!
Gab Dost thou know
Aught of their future?
Luc Only as much as this
That evil will increase and multiply
Without a benediction
Gab Nothing more?
Luc Why, so the angels taunt!
What should be more?
Gab God is more
Luc Proving what?
Gab That He is God,
And capable of saving Lucifer,
I charge thee by the solitude He kept

Ere He created,—leave the earth to
God!
Luc My foot is on the earth, firm
as my sin!
Gab I charge thee by the memory
of Heaven
Ere any sin was done,—leave earth
to God!
Luc My sin is on the earth, to
reign thereon
Gab I charge thee by the choral
song we sang,
When up against the white shore of
our feet,
The depths of the creation swelled
and brake,—
And the new worlds, the beaded foam
and flower
Of all that coil, roared outward into
space
On thunder-edges,—leave the earth
to God!
Luc My woe is on the earth, to
curse thereby
Gab I charge thee by that mourn-
ful Morning Star
Which trembles
Luc Enough spoken
As the pine
In norland forest, drops its weight of
snows
By a night's growth, so, growing to-
ward my ends,
Idroph thy counsels Farewell, Gabriell
Watch out thy service, I achieve
my will
And peradventure in the after years,
When thoughtful men shall bend
their spacious brows
Upon the storm and strife seen every-
where
To ruffle their smooth manhood and
break up
With lurid lights of intermittent hope
Their human fear and wrong,—they
may discern
The heart of a lost angel in the earth

CHORUS OF EDEN SPIRITS
(*Chanting from Paradise while ADAM and
EVE fly across the Sword-glare*)
HEARKEN, oh hearken! let your souls,
behind you,
Turn, gently moved!
Our voices feel along the Dread to find
you,

O lost, beloved !
 Through the thick-shielded and strong-
 marshalled angels,
 They press and pierce
 Our requiems follow fast on our evan-
 gels —
 Voice throbs in verse !
 We are but orphaned Spirits left in
 Eden
 A time ago,
 God gave us golden cups, and we
 were bidden
 To feed you so !
 But now our right hand hath no cup
 remaining,
 No work to do,
 The mystic hydromel is spilt, and
 staining
 The whole earth through !
 Most ineradicable stains for showing
 (Not interfused !)
 That brighter colours were the
 world's foregoing,
 Than shall be used
 Hearken, oh hearken ! ye shall hear-
 ken surely,
 For years and years,
 The noise beside you, dripping coldly,
 purely,
 Of spirits' tears !
 The yearning to a beautiful denied
 you,
 Shall strain your powers,
 Ideal sweetnesses shall overglide you,
 Resumed from ours !
 In all your music, our pathetic minor
 Your ears shall cross,
 And all fair sights shall mind you of
 diviner,
 With sense of loss !
 We shall be near, in all your poet-
 languors
 And wild extremes,
 What time ye vex the desert with vain
 angers,
 Or mock with dreams !
 And when upon you, weary after
 roaming,
 Death's seal is put,
 By the foregone ye shall discern the
 coming,
 Through eyelids shut

Spirits of the Trees

Hark ! the Eden trees are stirring,
 Slow and solemn in your hearing !

Oak and linden, palm and fir,
 Tamarisk and juniper,
 Each still throbbing in vibration
 Since that crowning of creation
 When the God-breath spake abroad,
 "Let us make man like to God" —
 And the pine stood quivering
 As the awful word went by,
 Like a vibrant music-string
 Stretched from mountain-peak to
 sky !
 And the platan did expand,
 Slow and gradual, bough and head,
 And the cedar's strong black shade
 Fluttered brokenly and grand ! —
 Grove and wood were swept aslant
 In emotion jubilant

Voice of the same, but softer

Which divine impulsion cleaves
 In dim movements to the leaves
 Dropt and lifted, dropt and lifted
 In the sunlight greenly sifted —
 In the sunlight and the moonlight
 Greenly sifted through the trees
 Ever wave the Eden trees
 In the night and the moonlight,
 With a rustling of green branches
 Shaded off to resonances,
 Never stirred by rain or breeze !
 Fare ye well, farewell !
 The sylvan sounds no longer audible,
 Expue at Eden's door
 Each footstep of your treading
 Treads out some murmur which ye
 heard before
 Farewell ! the trees of Eden
 Ye shall hear nevermore

River-Spirits

Hark ! the flow of the four rivers —
 Hark the flow !
 How the silence round you shivers,
 While our voices through it go,
 Cold and clear

A softer voice

Think a little, while ye hear, —
 Of the banks
 Where the willows and the deer
 Crowd in intermingled ranks,
 As if all would drink at once,
 Where the living water runs —
 Of the fishes' golden edges
 Flashing in and out the sedges,
 Of the swans on silver thrones,
 Floating down the winding streams

With impassive eyes turned shore-ward

And a chant of undertones,—
And the lotos leaning forward
To help them into dreams

Fare ye well, farewell !

The river-sounds, no longer audible,
Expire at Eden's door

Each footstep of your treading
Treads out some murmur which ye
heard before

Farewell ! the streams of Eden
Ye shall hear nevermore

Bird-Spirit

I am the nearest nightingale

That singeth in Eden after you ,

And I am singing loud and true,

And sweet,—I do not fail !

I sit upon a cypress bough

Close to the gate, and I fling my
song

Over the gate and through the mail
Of the warden angels marshalled
strong,—

Over the gate and after you !

And the warden angels let it pass,
Because the poor brown bird alas !

Sings in the garden, sweet and
true

And I build my song of high pure
notes

Note over note, height over
height,

Till I strike the arch of the Infi-
nite,

And I bridge abysmal agonies

With strong, clear calms of har-
monies,—

And something abides, and some-
thing floats,

In the song which I sing after you

Fare ye well, farewell !

The creature sounds, no longer audible,
Expire at Eden's door

Each footstep of your treading
Treads out some cadence which ye
heard before

Farewell ! the birds of Eden
Ye shall hear nevermore

Flower-Spirits

We linger, we linger,

The last of the throng !

Like the tones of a singer

Who loves his own song

We are spirit-aromas

Of blossom and bloom ,

We call your thoughts home as

Ye breathe our perfume,—

To the amaranth's splendour

Afire on the slopes ,

To the lily-bells tender,

And grey heliotropes

To the poppy-plains keeping

Such dream-breath and blee,

That the angels there stepping

Grew whiter to see

To the nook set with moly,

Ye jested one day in,

Till your smile waxed too holy,

And left your lips praying

To the rose in the bower-place

That-dripped o'er you sleeping ,

To the as-phodel flower-place,

Ye walked ankle-deep in !

We pluck at your raiment,

We stroke down your hair,—

We faint in our lament,

And pine into air

Fare ye well, farewell !

The Eden scents no longer sensible,

Expire at Eden's door

Each footstep of your treading

Treads out some fragrance which ye
knew before

Farewell ! the flowers of Eden

Ye shall smell nevermore

[There is silence ADAM and EVE fly on,
and never look back Only a colossal
shadow, as of the dark ANGEL passing
quickly, is cast upon the Sword glare

SCENE—The extremity of the Sword-
glare

Adam Pausing a moment on this
outer edge

Where the supernal sword-glare cuts
in light

The dark exterior desert,—hast thou -
strength,

Beloved, to look behind us to the
gate ?

Eve Have I not strength to look
up to thy face ?

Adam We need be strong yon
spectacle of cloud

Which seals the gate up to the final
doom,

Is God's seal manifest There seem
to lie

A hundred thunders in it, dark and
dead ,

The unmolten lightnings vein it motionless,
 And, outward from its depth, the self-moved sword
 Swings slow its awful gnomon of red fire
 From side to side,—in pendulous horror slow,—
 Across the stagnant, ghastly glare thrown flat
 On the intermediate ground from that to this
 The angelic hosts, the archangelic pomps,
 Thrones, dominations, principedoms, rank on rank,
 Rising sublimely to the feet of God,
 On either side and overhead the gate,
 Show like a glittering and sustained smoke
 Drawn to an apex That their faces shine
 Betwixt the solemn clasping of their wings,
 Clapsed high to a silver point above their heads,—
 We only guess from hence, and not discern
Eve Though we were near enough to see them shine,
 The shadow on thy face were awfuller,
 To me, at least,—to me—than all their light
Adam What is this, Eve? thou droppest heavily
 In a heap earthward, and thy body heaves
 Under the golden floodings of thine hair!
Eve O Adam, Adam! by that name of Eve—
 Thine Eve, thy life—which suits me little now,
 Seeing that I confess myself thy death
 And thine undoer, as the snake was mine,—
 I do adjure thee, put me straight away,
 Together with my name Sweet, punish me!
 O Love, be just! and, ere we pass beyond
 The light cast outward by the fiery sword,

Into the dark which earth must be to us,
 Bruise my head with thy foot,—as the curse said
 My seed shall the first tempter's, strike with curse,
 As God struck in the garden! and as He,
 Being satisfied with justice and with wrath,
 Did roll His thunder gentler at the close,—
 Thou, peradventure, may'st at last recoil
 To some soft need of mercy Strike, my lord!
 I, also, after tempting, writhe on the ground,
 And I would feed on ashes from thine hand,
 As suits me, O my tempted!
Adam My beloved,
 Mine Eve and life—I have no other name
 For thee or for the sun than what ye are,
 My utter life and light! If we have fallen,
 It is that we have sinned,—we God is just,
 And, since His curse doth comprehend us both,
 It must be that His balance holds the weights
 Of first and last sin on a level What!
 Shall I who had no virtue to stand straight
 Among the hills of Eden, here assume
 To mend the justice of the perfect God,
 By piling up a curse upon His curse,
 Against thee—thee—
Eve For so, perchance, thy God
 Might take thee into grace for scorning me,
 Thy wrath against the sinner giving proof
 Of inward abrogation of the sin!
 And so, the blessed angels might come down
 And walk with thee as erst—I think they would,—
 Because I was not near to make them sad,
 Or soil the rustling of their innocence

Adam They know me I am
 deepest in the guilt,
 If last in the transgression
Eve Thou!
Adam If God,
 Who gave the right and joyaunce of
 the world
 Both unto thee and me,—gave thee to
 me,
 The best gift last, the last sin was
 the worst,
 Which sinned against more comple-
 ment of gifts
 And grace of giving God! I render
 back
 Strong benediction and perpetual
 praise
 From mortal feeble lips (as incense-
 smoke,
 Out of a little censer may fill Heaven),
 That Thou, in striking my benumbed
 hands
 And forcing them to drop all other
 boons
 Of beauty, and dominion, and de-
 light,—
 Hast left this well-beloved Eve—this
 life
 Within life—this best gift between
 their palms,
 In gracious compensation!
Eve Is it thy voice?
 Or some saluting angel's—calling
 home
 My feet into the garden?
Adam O my God!
 I, standing here between the glory
 and the dark,—
 The glory of Thy wrath projected
 forth
 From Eden's wall, the dark of our
 distress
 Which settles a step off in that drear
 world—
 Lift up to Thee the hands from whence
 hath fallen
 Only creation's sceptre,—thanking
 Thee
 That rather Thou hast cast me out
 with *her*,
 Than left me lorn of her in Paradise,
 With angel looks and angel songs
 around
 To show the absence of her eyes and
 voice,
 And make society full desertness

Without her use in comfort
Eve Where is loss?
 Am I in Eden? can another speak
 Mine own love's tongue?
Adam Because with *her*, I stand
 Upright, as far as can be in this fall,
 And look away from Heaven, which
 doth accuse,
 And look away from earth which
 doth convict,
 Into her face, and crown my dis-
 crowned brow
 Out of her love, and put the thought
 of her
 Around me, for an Eden full of birds,
 And lift her body up—thus—to my
 heart,
 And with my lips upon her lips,—
 thus, thus —
 Do quicken and sublimate my mortal
 breath,
 Which cannot climb against the
 grave's steep sides
 But overtops this grief!
Eve I am renewed!
 My eyes grow with the light which is
 in thine,
 The silence of my heart is full of sound
 Hold me up—so! Because I com-
 prehend
 This human love, I shall not be afraid
 Of any human death, and yet be-
 cause
 I know this strength of love, I seem to
 know
 Death's strength by that same sign
 Kiss on my lips,
 To shut the door close on my rising
 soul,—
 Lest it pass outwards in astonishment,
 And leave thee lonely
Adam Yet thou liest, Eve,
 Bent heavily on thyself across mine
 arm,
 Thy face flat to the sky
Eve Ay! and the tears
 Running, as it might seem, my life
 from me,
 They run so fast and warm Let me
 lie so,
 And weep so,—as if in a dream or
 prayer,—
 Unfastening, clasp by clasp, the hard,
 tight thought
 Which clipped my heart and showed
 me evermore

Loathed of thy justice as I loathe the
snake,
And as the pure ones loathe our sin
To-day,
All day, beloved, as we fled across
This desolating radiance cast by
swords
Not suns,—my lips prayed soundless
to myself,
Striking against each other—O Lord
God !
('Twas so I prayed), I ask Thee by my
sin,
And by Thy curse, and by Thy blame-
less heavens,
Make dreadful haste to hide me from
Thy face
And from the face of my beloved here
For whom I am no helpmeet, quick
away
Into the new dark mystery of death !
I will lie still there, I will make no
plaint,
I will not sigh, nor sob, nor speak a
word,
Nor struggle to come back beneath
the sun,
Where peradventure I might sin anew
Against Thy mercy and his pleasure
Death,
O death whate'er it be, is good enough
For such as I—While for mine Adam
here
No voice shall say again in Heaven or
earth,
" *It is not good for him to be alone* "
Adam And was it good for such a
prayer to pass,
My unkind Eve, betwixt our mutual
lives ?
If I am exiled, must I be bereaved ?
Eve 'Twas an ill prayer it shall
be prayed no more,
And God did use it for a foolishness,
Giving no answer Now my heart
has grown
Too high and strong for such a foolish
prayer,
Love makes it strong and since I
was the first
In the transgression, with a steady foot
I will be first to tread from this sword-
glare
Into the outer darkness of the waste,—
And thus I do it,
Adam Thus I follow thee,

As erewhile in the sin—What sounds !
what sounds !
I feel a music which comes straight
from Heaven
As tender as a watering dew
Eve I think
That angels—not those guarding
Paradise,—
But the love-angels who came erst to us,
And when we said " God," fainted
unawares
Back from our mortal presence unto
God
(As if He drew them inward in a
breath),
His name being heard of them,—I
think that they
With sliding voices lean from heavenly
towers,
Invisible, but gracious Hark—how
soft !

CHORUS OF INVISIBLE ANGELS

Faint and tender

Mortal man and woman,
Go upon your travel !
Heaven assist the Human
Smoothly to unravel
All that web of pain
Wherein ye are holden
Do ye know our voices
Chanting down the Golden ?
Do ye guess our choice is,
Being un beholden
To be hearkened by you yet again ?

This pure door of opal
God hath shut between us,—
Us, His shining people,
You, who once have seen us
And are blinded new !
Yet, across the doorway,
Past the silence reaching,
Farewells evermore may,
Blessing in the teaching,
Glide from us to you

First semichorus

Think how erst your Eden,
Day on day succeeding,
With our presence glowed
We came as if the Heavens were
bowed
To a milder music rare !
Ye saw us in our solemn treading,
Treading down the steps of cloud,

While our wings, outspreading
Double calms of whiteness
Dropped superfluous brightness
Down from stair to stair

Second semichorus

Or oft abrupt though tender,
While ye gazed on space,
We flashed our angel-splendour
In either human face !
With mystic lilies in our hands,
From the atmospheric bands
Breaking with a sudden grace,
We took you unaware !
While our feet struck glories
Outward, smooth and fair,
Which we stood on floorwise,
Platformed in mid air

First semichorus

Or oft, when Heaven descended,
Stood we in your wondering sight
In a mute apocalypse !
With dumb vibrations on our lips,
From hosannas ended,
And grand half-vanishings
Of the empyreal things
Within our eyes, belated
Till the heavenly Infinite
Falling off from the Created
Left our inward contemplation
Opening into ministration

Chorus

Then upon our axle turning
Of great joy to anticipate
We sang out the morning,
Broadening up the sky—
Or we drew
Our music through
The noontide's hush and heat and
shme,
Informed with our intense Divine—
Interrupted vital notes
Palpitating hither, thither,
Burning out into the æther,—
Sensible like fiery motes !—
Or, whenever twilight drifted
Through the cedar masses,
The globed sun we lifted,
Trailing purple, trailing gold
Out between the passes
Of the mountains manifold,
To anthems slowly sung !
While he, aweary, half in swoon,
For joy to hear our climbing tune

Transpierce the stars' concentric
rings,—
The burden of his glory flung
In broken lights upon our wings

[*The chant dies away confusedly, and
LUCIFER appears*]

Luc Now may all fruits be
pleasant to thy lips
Beautiful Eve ! The times have
somewhat changed
Since thou and I had talk beneath a
tree
Albert ye are not gods yet
Eve Adam ! hold
My right hand strongly It is
Lucifer—

And we have love to lose
Adam I' the name of God,
Go apart from us, O thou Lucifer !
And leave us to the desert thou hast
made
Out of thy treason Bring no serpent-
slime
Athwart this path kept holy to our
tears,
Or we may curse thee with their
bitterness

Luc Curse freely ! curses thicken
Why, this Eve
Who thought me once part worthy of
her ear
And somewhat wiser than the other
beasts,—
Drawing together her large globes of
eyes
The light of which is throbbing in and
out

Their steadfast continuity of gaze —
Knots her fair eyebrows in so hard a
knot
And down from her white heights of
womanhood,
Looks on me so amazed,—I scarce
should fear
To wager such an apple as she plucked,
Against one riper from the tree of life,
That she could curse too—as a
woman may—

Smooth in the vowels
Eve So—speak wickedly !
I like it best so Let thy words be
wounds —
For, so, I shall not fear thy power to
hurt

Trench on the forms of good by open ill—

For so, I shall wax strong and grand with scorn

Scorning myself for ever trusting thee
As far as thinking, ere a snake-eaten dust,
He could speak wisdom

Luc Our new gods, it seems,
Deal more in thunders than in courtesies

And, sooth, mine own Olympus,
which anon

I shall build up to loud-voiced imagery
From all the wandering visions of the world,—

May show worse railing than our lady Eve

Pours o'er the rounding of her argent arm

But why should this be ? Adam pardoned Eve

Adam Adam loved Eve Jehovah pardon both !

Eve Adam forgave Eve—because loving Eve

Luc So, well Yet Adam was undone of Eve,

As both were by the snake Therefore forgive,

In like wise, fellow-temptress, the poor snake—

Who stung there, not so poorly !

[*Aside*

Eve Hold thy wrath,
Beloved Adam ! let me answer him,
For this time he speaks truth, which we should hear,

And asks for mercy, which I most should grant

In like wise, as he tells us—in like wise !

And therefore I thee pardon, Lucifer,
As freely as the streams of Eden flowed

When we were happy by them So, depart,

Leave us to walk the remnant of our time

Out mildly in the desert Do not seek

To harm us any more or scoff at us
Or ere the dust be laid upon our face
To find there the communion of the dust

And issue of the curse —Go

Adam At once, go

Luc Forgive ! and go ! Ye images of clay,

Shrunk somewhat in the mould,—
what jest is this ?

What words are these to use ? By what thought

Conceive ye of me ? Yesterday—a snake !

To-day—what ?

Adam A strong spirit

Eve A sad spirit

Adam Perhaps a fallen angel —
Who shall say !

Luc Who told thee, Adam ?

Adam Thou ! The prodigy
Of thy vast brows and melancholy eyes

Which comprehend the heights of some great fall

I think that thou hast one day worn a crown

Under the eyes of God

Luc And why of God ?

Adam It were no crown else
Verily, I think

Thou'rt fallen far I had not yesterday

Said it so surely, but I know to-day
Grief by grief, sin by sin !

Luc A crown, by a crown

Adam Ay, mock me ! now I know
more than I knew

Now I know thou art fallen below hope
Of final re-ascent

Luc Because ?

Adam Because
A spirit who expected to see God,
Though at the last point of a million years

Could dare no mockery of a ruined man

Such as this Adam

Luc Who is high and bold—
Be it said passing !—of a good red clay

Discovered on some top of Lebanon,
Or haply of Aornus, beyond sweep
Of the black eagle's wing ! A furlong lower

Had made a meeker king for Eden
Soh !

Is it not possible, by sin and grief
(To give the things your names)
that spirits should rise
Instead of falling ?

Adam Most impossible

The Highest being the Holy and the Glad,
 Whoever rises must approach delight
 And sanctity in the act
Luc Ha, my clay-king !
 Thou wilt not rule by wisdom very long
 The after generations Earth, methinks,
 Will disinherit thy philosophy
 For a new doctrine suited to thine heirs,
 And class these present dogmas with the rest
 Of the old-world traditions—Eden fruits
 And saurian fossils
Eve Speak no more with him,
 Beloved ! it is not good to speak with him
 Go from us, Lucifer, and speak no more !
 We have no pardon which thou dost not scorn,
 Nor any bliss, thou seest, for coveting,
 Nor innocence for staining Being bereft,
 We would be alone —Go
Luc Ah ! ye talk the same,
 All of you—spirits and clay—go, and depart !
 In Heaven they said so, and at Eden's gate,—
 And here, reiterant, in the wilderness !
 None saith, "Stay with me, for thy face is fair !"
 None saith, "Stay with me, for thy voice is sweet !"
 And yet I was not fashioned out of clay
 Look on me, woman ! Am I beautiful ?
Eve Thou hast a glorious darkness,
Luc Nothing more ?
Eve I think no more
Luc False Heart—thou thinkest more !
 Thou canst not choose but think, as I praise God,
 Unwillingly but fully, that I stand
 Most absolute in beauty As yourselves
 Were fashioned very good at best, so
we
 Sprang very beauteous from the creant Word

Which thrilled around us—God Himself being moved
 When that august work of a perfect shape
 His dignities of sovran angelhood,
 Swept out into the universe,—divine
 With thunderous movements, earnest looks of gods,
 And silver-solemn clash of cymbal wings !
 Whereof was I, in motion and in form
 A part not poorest And yet,—yet, perhaps,
 This beauty which I speak of, is not here,
 As God's voice is not here, nor even my crown—
 I do not know What is this thought or thing
 Which I call beauty ? is it thought, or thing ?
 Is it a thought accepted for a thing ?
 Or both ? or neither ?—a pretext—a word ?
 Its meaning flutters in me like a flame
 Under my own breath my perceptions reel
 For evermore around it, and fall off,
 As if it too were holy
Eve Which it is
Adam The essence of all beauty,
 I call love
 The attribute, the evidence, and end,
 The consummation to the inward sense,
 Of beauty apprehended from without,
 I still call love As form, when colourless,
 Is nothing to the eye,—that pine-tree there,
 Without its black and green, being all a blank,—
 So, without love, is beauty undiscerned
 In man or angel Angel ! rather ask
 What love is in thee, what love moves to thee,
 And what collateral love moves on with thee,
 Then shalt thou know if thou art beautiful
Luc Love ! what is love ? I lose it
 Beauty and love !
 I darken to the image Beauty—Love !
[He fades away, while a low music sound

Adam Thou art pale, Eve
Eve The precipice of ill
 Down this colossal nature, dizzies
 me—

And, hark! the starry harmony re-
 mote

Seems measuring the heights from
 whence he fell

Adam Think that we have not
 fallen so By the hope

And aspiration, by the love and faith,
 We do exceed the stature of this angel

Eve Happier we are than he is,
 by the death!

Adam Or rather by the life of
 the Lord God!

How dim the angel grows, as if that
 blast

Of music swept him back into the
 dark

[*The music is strong, & it is into
 uncertain*]

Eve It throbs in on us like a
 plaintive heart,

Pressing, with slow pulsations, vibra-
 tive,

Its gradual sweetness through the
 yielding air

To such expression as the stars may
 use,

Most starry-sweet and strange! With
 every note

That grows more loud, the angel grows
 more dim

Receding in proportion to approach,
 Until he stand afar,—a shade

Adam Now words

SONG OF THE MORNING STAR TO LUCIFER

*He fades utterly away and vanishes, as it
 proceeds*

Mine orb'd image sinks

Back from thee, back from thee,

As thou art fallen methinks,

Back from me, back from me

O my light-bearer

Could another fairer

Lack to thee, lack to thee?

Ai, ai, Heosphoros!

I loved thee with the fiery love of
 stars

Who love by burning, and by loving
 move,

Too near the throned Jehovah not to
 love

Ai ai, Heosphoros!

Their brows flash fast on me from
 gliding cars

Pale-passioned for my loss

Ai, ai, Heosphoros!

Mine orb'd heats drop cold

Down from thee down from thee,

As fell thy grace of old

Down from me down from me

O my light-bearer,

Is another fairer

Won to thee won to thee?

Ah ah Heosphoros

Great love preceded loss

Known to thee, known to thee

Ah ah!

Thou, breathing thy communicable
 grace

Of life into my light

Mine astral faces, from thine angel
 face

Hast only fed

And flooded me with radiance over-
 much

From thy pure height

Ah, ah!

Thou, with calm floating pinions both
 ways spread

Erect irradiated

Didst sting my wheel of glory

On on before thee

Along the Godlight by a quickening
 touch!

Ha ha!

Around, around the firmamental
 ocean,

I swam expanding with delirious fire!
 Around around, around, in blind
 desire

To be drawn upward to the Infinite—
 Ha, ha!

Until, the motion flinging out the
 motion

To a keen whirl of passion and avid-
 ity,—

To a blind whirl of rapture and de-
 light—

I wound in gyran orbits, smooth and
 white

With that intense rapidity!

Around around

I wound and interwound

While all the cyclic heavens about me
 spun!

Stars, planets, suns, and moons, dilated broad
Then flashed together into a single sun,
And wound, and wound in one,
And as they wound I wound,—around around,
In a great fire I almost took for God!
Ha, ha, Heosphoros!

Thine angel glory sinks
Down from me, down from me—
My beauty falls, methinks,
Down from thee, down from thee!
O my light-bearer,
O my path-preparer
Gone from me, gone from me!
Ah, ah, Heosphoros!
I cannot kindle underneath the brow
Of this new angel here, who is not Thou
All things are altered since that time ago,—
And if I shine at eve, I shall not know!
I am strange—I am slow!
Ah ah Heosphoros!

Henceforward, human eyes of lovers be
The only sweetest sight that I shall see,
With tears between the looks raised up to me
Ah, ah!
When, having wept all night, at break of day,
Above the folded hills they shall survey
My light, a little trembling, in the grey
Ah, ah!
And gazing on me, such shall comprehend,
Through all my piteous pomp at morn or even,
And melancholy leaning out of Heaven,
That love, their own divine, may change or end,
That love may close in loss!
Ah, ah, Heosphoros!

SCENE—*Farther on A wild open country seen vaguely in the approaching night*

Adam How doth the wide and melancholy earth
Gather her hills around us, grey and ghast,

And stare with blank significance of loss

Right in our faces! Is the wind up?
Eve Nay

Adam And yet the cedars and the junipers

Rock slowly through the mist, without a sound,

And shapes which have no certainty of shape

Drift dusky in and out between the pines,

And loom along the edges of the hills,
And lie flat, curdling in the open ground—

Shadows without a body, which contract

And lengthen as we gaze on them.
Eve O Life

Which is not man's nor angel's!
What is this?

Adam No cause for fear The circle of God's life

Contains all life beside
Eve I think the earth

Is crazed with curse, and wanders from the sense

Of those first laws affixed to form and space

Or ever she knew sin!
Adam We will not fear

We were brave sinning
Eve Yea, I plucked the fruit

With eyes upturned to Heaven, and seeing there

Our god-thrones, as the tempter said,
—not God

My heart, which beat then, sinks
The sun hath sunk

Out of sight with our Eden
Adam Night is near

Eve And God's curse, nearest
Let us travel back,

And stand within the sword-glare till we die,

Believing it is better to meet death
Than suffer desolation

Adam Nay, beloved!
We must not pluck death from the

Maker's hand,
As erst we plucked the apple we must wait

Until He gives death as He gave us life,

Nor murmur faintly o'er the primal gift

Because we spoult its sweetness with
our sin
Eve Ah, ah ! Dost thou discern
what I behold ?
Adam I see all How the spirits
in thine eyes
From their dilated orbits bound before
To meet the spectral Dread !
Eve I am afraid—
Ah, ah ! The twilight bristles wild
with shapes
Of intermittent motion, aspect vague
And mystic bearings, which o'er-
creep the earth,
Keeping slow time with horrors in
the blood
How near they reach and far !
How grey they move—
Treading upon the darkness without
feet,—
And fluttering on the darkness with-
out wings !
Some run like dogs, with noses to the
ground,
Some keep one path, like sheep,
some rock like trees,
Some glide like a fallen leaf, and some
flow on,
Copious as rivers
Adam Some spring up like fire—
And some coil
Eve Ah, ah ! Dost thou pause
to say
Like what ?—coil like the serpent,
when he fell
From all the emerald splendour of
his height
And writhed,—and could not climb
against the curse,
Not a ring's length I am afraid—
afraid—
I think it is God's will to make me
afraid,—
Permitting THESE to haunt us in the
place
Of His beloved angels—gone from us
Because we are not pure Dear Pity
of God,
That didst permit the angels to go
home
And live no more with us who are not
pure,
Save us too from a loathly company—
Almost as loathly in our eyes, perhaps,
As we are in the purest ! Pity us—
Us too ! nor shut us in the dark, away

From verity and from stability,
Or what we name such through the
precedence
Of earth's adjusted uses,—leave us
not
To doubt betwixt our senses and our
souls
Which are the most distraught and
full of pain
And weak of apprehension
Adam Courage Sweet !
The mystic shapes ebb back from us,
and drop
With slow concentric movement,
each on each,—
Expressing wider spaces,—and col-
lapsed
In lines more definite for imagery
And clearer for relation, till the
throng
Of shapeless spectra merge into a
few
Distinguishable phantasms vague
and grand
Which sweep out and around us
vastly
And hold us in a circle and a calm
Eve Strange phantasms of pale
shadow ! there are twelve
Thou who didst name all lives, hast
names for these ?
Adam Methinks this is the zodiac
of the earth,
Which rounds us with its visionary
dread,—
Responding with twelve shadowy
signs of earth
In fantasmagorical apposition and approach,
To those celestial, constellated twelve
Which palpitate adown the silent
nights
Under the pressure of the hand of God
Stretched wide in benediction At
this hour,
Not a star pricketh the flat gloom of
heaven !
But, girdling close our nether wilder-
ness,
The zodiac-figures of the earth loom
slow —
Drawn out, as suiteth with the place
and time,
In twelve colossal shades instead of
stars,
Through which the ecliptic line of
mystery

Strikes bleakly with an unrelenting
scope,
Foreshowing life and death
Eve By dream or sense,
Do we see this ?
Adam Our spirits have climbed
high
By reason of the passion of our grief,—
And, from the top of sense, looked
over sense
To the significance and heart of things
Rather than things themselves
Eve And the dim twelve
Adam Are dim exponents of the
creature-life
As earth contains it Gaze on them,
beloved !
By stricter apprehension of the sight,
Suggestions of the creatures shall
assuage
Thy terror of the shadows,—what
is known
Subduing the unknown and taming it
From all prodigious dread That
phantasm, there,
Presents a lion,—albeit twenty times
As large as any lion—with a roar
Set soundless in his vibratory jaws,
And a strange horror stirring in his
mane !
And, there, a pendulous shadow
seems to weigh—
Good against ill, perchance, and
there, a crab
Puts coldly out its gradual shadow-
claws,
Like a slow blot that spreads,—till
all the ground,
Crawled over by it, seems to crawl
itself,
A bull stands horned here with gib-
bous glooms,
And a ram likewise ! and a scorpion
writhes
Its tail in ghastly slime and stings
the dark !
This way a goat leaps with wild
blank of beard,
And here, fantastic fishes dusky
float,
Using the calm for waters, while
their fins
Throb out slow rhythms along the
shallow air !
While images more human—
Eve How he stands,

That phantasm of a man—who is not
thou !
Two phantasms of two men !
Adam One that sustains,
And one that strives !—resuming,
so, the ends
Of manhood's curse of labour ! Dost
thou see
That phantasm of a woman ?—
Eve I have seen—
But look off to those small human-
ities !
Which draw me tenderly across my
fear,—
Lesser and fainter than my woman-
hood
Or yet thy manhood—with strange
innocence
Set in the misty lines of head and hand
They lean together ! I would gaze on
them
Longer and longer, till my watching
eyes,—
As the stars do in watching any-
thing,—
Should light them forward from
their outline vague,
To clear configuration—
*Two Spirits, of organic and inorganic
nature, arise from the ground*
But what Shapes
Rise up between us in the open space,—
And thrust me into horror back from
hope !
Adam Colossal Shapes—twin
soveran images,—
With a disconsolate, blank majesty
Set in their wondrous faces !—with
no look,
And yet an aspect—a significance
Of individual life and passionate ends,
Which overcomes us gazing
O bleak sound !
O shadow of sound, O phantasm of
thin sound !
How it comes, wheeling as the pale
moth wheels,
¹ Adam recognises in *Aquarius* the water
bearer, and *Sagittarius*, the archer, distinct types
of the man bearing and the man combating,—
the passive and active forms of human labour
I hope that the preceding zodiacal signs—trans-
ferred to the earthly shadow and representative
purpose—of Aries Taurus Cancer, Leo Libra,
Scorpio Capricornus and Pisces, are sufficiently
obvious to the reader
² Her maternal instinct is excited by *Gemini*

Wheeling and wheeling in continuous
wail
Around the cyclic zodiac, and gains
force,
And gathers, settling coldly like a
moth,
On the wan faces of these images
We see before us, whereby modified,
It draws a straight line of articulate
song
From out that spiral faintness of
lament—
And, by one voice, expresses many
griefs

First Spirit

I am the spirit of the harmless earth !
God spake me softly out among the
stars,
As softly as a blessing of much
worth,—
And then, His smile did follow un-
awares
That all things, fashioned so for use
and duty
Might shine anointed with His chrism
of beauty—

Yet I wail !

I drave on with the worlds exultingly,
Obliquely down the Godlight's
gradual fall—
Individual aspect and complexity
Of gyratory orb and interval
Lost in the fluent motion of delight
Toward the high ends of Being be-
yond sight—

Yet I wail !

Second Spirit

I am the spirit of the harmless beasts,
Of flying things, and creeping
things and swimming,
Of all the lives, erst set at silent feasts,
That found the love-kiss on the
goblet brimming
And tasted in each drop within the
measure
The sweetest pleasure of their Lord's
good pleasure—

Yet I wail !

Whata full hum of life, around His lips
Bore witness to the fulness of crea-
tion !
How all the grand words were full-
laden ships
Each sailing onward from enuncia-
tion

To separate existence,—and each
bearing
The creature's power of joying, hop-
ing, fearing !—
Yet I wail !

Eve They wail, beloved ! they
speak of glory and God
And they wail—wail That burden
of the song
Drops from it like its fruit, and
heavily falls
Into the lap of silence !

Adam

Hark, again !

First Spirit

I was so beautiful, so beautiful
My joy stood up within me bold
to add
A word to God's,—and, when His
work was full,
To "very good," responded "very
glad !"
Filtered through roses, did the light
enclose me,
And bunches of the grape swam blue
across me—
Yet I wail !

Second Spirit

I bounded with my panthers ! I re-
joiced
In my young tumbling lions rolled
together !
My stag, the river at his fetlocks,
poised
Then dipped his antlers through
the golden weather
In the same ripple which the alligator
Left, in his joyous troubling of the
water—
Yet I wail !

First Spirit

O my deep waters, cataract and
flood,—
What wordless triumph did your
voices render !
O mountain-summits, where the
angels stood,
And shook from head and wing
thick dews of splendour !
How with a holy quiet, did your
Earthy
Accept that Heavenly—knowing ye
were worthy !—
Yet I wail !

Second Spirit

O my wild wood-dogs, with your
listening eyes!
My horses—my ground-eagles, for
swift fleeing!
My birds, with viewless wings of har-
monies,—
My calm cold fishes of a silver
being,—
How happy were ye, living and pos-
sessing,
O fair half-souls capacious of full
blessing
Yet I wail!

First Spirit

I wail, I wail! Now hear my charge
to-day,
Thou man, thou woman, marked
as the misdoers
By God's sword at your backs! I lent
my clay
To make your bodies, which had
grown more flowers
And now, in change for what I lent,
ye give me
The thorn to vex, the tempest-fire to
cleave me—
And I wail!

Second Spirit

I wail, I wail! Behold ye that I
fasten
My sorrow's fang upon your souls
dishonoured?
Accursed transgressors! down the
steep ye hasten,—
Your crown's weight on the world,
to drag it downward
Unto your ruin Lo! my lions,
scenting
The blood of wars, roar hoarse and
unrelenting—
And I wail!

First Spirit

I wail, I wail! Do ye hear that I
wail?
I had no part in your transgression—
none!
My roses on the bough did bud not
pale—
My rivers did not loiter in the sun,
I was obedient Wherefore in my
centre
Do I thrill at this curse of death and
winter?—
And I wail!

Second Spirit

I wail, I wail! I wail in the assault
Of undeserved perdition, sorely
wounded!
My nightingale sang sweet without a
fault,
My gentle leopards innocently
bounded,
We were obedient—what is this con-
vulsus
Our blameless life with pangs and
fever-pulses?—
And I wail!

Eve I choose God's thunder and
His angels' swords

To die by, Adam, rather than such
words

Let us pass out, and flee

Adam We cannot flee.

This zodiac of the creatures' cruelty
Curls round us, like a river cold and
drear,
And shuts us in, constraining us to
hear

First Spirit

I feel your steps, O wandering sinners,
strike
A sense of death to me, and undug
graves!
The heart of earth, once calm, is trem-
bling like
The ragged foam along the ocean-
waves
The restless earthquakes rock against
each other —
The elements moan 'round me—
"Mother, mother"—
And I wail!

Second Spirit

Your melancholy looks do pierce me
through,
Corruption swathes the paleness
of your beauty
Why have ye done this thing? What
did we do
That we should fall from bliss as
ye from duty?
Wild shriek the hawks, in waiting
for their jesses,
Fierce howl the wolves along the
wildernesses—
And I wail!

Adam To thee, the Spirit of the
harmless earth—

To thee, the Spirit of earth's harm-
less lives—

Inferior creatures but still innocent—
Be salutation from a guilty mouth
Yet worthy of some audience and re-
spect

From you who are not guilty If we
have sinned,
God hath rebuked us, Who is over us,
To give rebuke or death, and if ye
wail

Because of any suffering from our sin,
Ye who are under and not over us,
Be satisfied with God, if not with us
And pass out from our presence in
such peace

As we have left you to enjoy revenge
Such as the Heavens have made you
Verily,

There must be strife between us, large
as sin

Eve No strife, mine Adam ! Let us
not stand high

Upon the wrong we did to reach dis-
dain,

Who rather should be humbler ever-
more,

Since self-makes sadder Adam ! shall
I speak—

I who spake once to such a bitter end—
Shall I speak humbly now, who once
was proud ?

I, schooled by sin to more humility
Than thou hast, O mine Adam, O my
king—

My king, if not the world's ?

Adam Speak as thou wilt
Eve Thus, then—my hand in
thine—

Sweet, dreadful Spirits !
I pray you humbly in the name of God,
Not to say of these tears, which are
impure—

Grant me such pardoning grace as
can go forth

From clean volitions toward a spotted
will,

From the wronged to the wronger,
thus and no more,

I do not ask more I am 'ware, in-
deed,

That absolute pardon is impossible
From you to me, by reason of my
sin,—

And that I cannot evermore, as once,
With worthy acceptance of pure joy,

Behold the trances of the holy hills
Beneath the leaning stars, or watch
the vales

Dew-pallid with their morning ec-
stasy,—

Or hear the winds make pastoral
peace between

Two grassy uplands,—and the river-
wells

Work out their bubbling lengths be-
neath the ground —

And all the birds sing till for joy of
song,

They lift their trembling wings as if
to heave

The too-much weight of music from
their heart

And float it up the aether ! I am
'ware

That these things I can no more appre-
hend

With a pure organ into a full delight,—
The sense of beauty and of melody

Being no more aided in me by the
sense

Of personal adjustment to those
heights

Of what I see well-formed or hear
well-tuned,

But rather coupled darkly and made
ashamed

By my perceiving of sin and fall
And melancholy of humilant

thoughts

But, oh ! fair, dreadful Spirits—albeit
this

Your accusation must confront my
soul,

And your pathetic utterance and full
gaze

Must evermore subdue me, be con-
tent—

Conquer me gently—as if pitying me,
Not to say loving ! let my tears fall
thick

As watering dews of Eden, unre-
proached,

And when your tongues reprove me,
make me smooth,

Not ruffled—smooth and still with
your reproof,

And peradventure better, while more
sad

For look to it, sweet Spirits—look
well to it—

It will not be amiss in you who kept

<p>The law of your own righteousness, and keep The right of your own griefs to mourn themselves — To pity me twice fallen,—from that and this,— From joy of place, and also right of wail — “ I wail ” being not for me—only “ I sin ” Look to it, O sweet Spirits !— For was I not, At that last sunset seen in Paradise When all the westering clouds flashed out in throngs Of sudden angel-faces, face by face, All hushed and solemn, as a thought of God Held them suspended,—was I not that hour The lady of the world, princess of life Mistress of feast and favour ? Could I touch A rose with my white hand, but it became Redder at once ? Could I walk leisurely Along our swarded garden, but the grass Tracked me with greenness ? Could I stand aside A moment underneath a cornel-tree, But all the leaves did tremble as alive With songs of fifty birds who were made glad Because I stood there ? Could I turn to look With these twain eyes of mine, now weeping fast Now good for only weeping,—upon man, Angel, or beast, or bird, but each re- joiced Because I looked on him ? Alas, alas ! And is not this much woe, to cry “ alas ! ” Speaking of joy ? And is not this more shame, To have made the woe myself, from all that joy ? To have stretched mine hand, and plucked it from the tree, And chosen it for fruit ? Nay, is not this Still most despair—to have halved that bitter fruit,</p>	<p>And ruined, so, the sweetest friend I have, Turning the GREATEST to mine enemy ? <i>Adam</i> I will not hear thee speak so Harken, Spirits ! Our God, Who is the enemy of none But only of their sin,—hath set your hope And my hope, in a promise, on this Head Show reverence, then,—and never bruise her more With unpermitted and extreme reproach,— Lest, passionate in anguish, she fling down Beneath your trampling feet, God’s gift to us Of sovereignty by reason and freewill, Sinning against the province of the Soul To rule the soulless Reverence her estate And pass out from her presence with no words <i>Eve</i> O dearest Heart, have patience with my heart ! O Spirits, have patience, ’stead of reverence — And let me speak, for, not being innocent, It little doth become me to be proud, And I am prescient by the very hope And promise set upon me, that hence- forth Only my gentleness shall make me great My humbleness exalt me Awful Spirits, Be witness that I stand in your reproof But one sun’s length off from my happiness— Happy, as I have said, to look around— Clear to look up !—And now ! I need not speak— Ye see me what I am, ye scorn me so,— Because ye see me what I have made myself From God’s best making ! Alas,— peace foregone — Love wronged, and virtue forfeit, and tears wept</p>
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Upon all, vainly! Alas, me! alas,
 Who have undone myself from all
 that best
 Fairest and sweetest, to this wretch-
 edest
 Saddest and most defiled—cast out,
 cast down—
 What word metes absolute loss? let
 absolute loss
 Suffice you for revenge For *I*, who
 lived
 Beneath the wings of angels yesterday,
 Wander to-day beneath the roofless
 world!
I, reigning the earth's empress
 yesterday,
 Put off from me, to-day, your hate
 with prayers!
I, yesterday, who answered the Lord
 God,
 Composed and glad as singing-birds
 the sun,
 Might shriek now from our dismal
 desert "God,"
 And hear Him make reply, "What is
 thy need,
 Thou whom I cursed to-day?"
Adam *Eve*!
Eve *I*, at last,
 Who yesterday was helpmate and
 delight
 Unto mine Adam, am to-day the grief
 And curse-mete for him! And, so,
 pity us,
 Ye gentle Spirits, and pardon him
 and me,
 And let some tender peace, made of
 our pain,
 Grow up betwixt us, as a tree might
 grow,
 With boughs on both sides In the
 shade of which,
 When presently ye shall behold us
 dead,—
 For the poor sake of our humility,
 Breathe out your pardon on our
 breathless lips
 And drop your twilight dews against
 our brows,
 And stroking with mild airs our
 harmless hands
 Left empty of all fruit, perceive your
 love
 Distilling through your pity over us,
 And suffer it, self-reconciled, to pass
LUCIFER rises in the circle

Luc Who talks here of a comple-
 ment of grief?
 Of expiation wrought by loss and
 fall?
 Of hate subduable to pity? *Eve*?
 Take counsel from thy counsellor
 the snake,
 And boast no more in grief, nor hope
 from pain,
 My docile *Eve*! I teach you to
 despond,
 Who taught you disobedience Look
 around,—
 Earth-spirits and phantasms hear
 you talk unmoved
 As if ye were red clay again and
 talked!
 What are your words to them? your
 griefs to them?
 Your deaths, indeed, to them? Did
 the hand pause
 For *their* sake, in the plucking of the
 fruit,
 That they should pause for *you*, in
 hating you?
 Or will your grief or death, as did
 your sin,
 Bring change upon their final doom?
 Behold,
 Your grief is but your sin in the
 rebound,
 And cannot expiate for it
Adam That is true
Luc Ay, that is true The clay-
 king testifies
 To the snake's counsel,—hear him!—
 very true
Earth Spirits I wail, I wail!
Luc And certes, *that* is true.
 Ye wail, ye all wail Peradventure *I*
 Could wail among you O thou
 universe,
 That holdest sin and woe,—more
 room for wail!
Distant starry voice Ah, ah, Heos-
 phoros! Heosphoros!
Earth Spirits I wail, I wail!
Adam Mark Lucifer He chan-
 ges awfully
Eve It seems as if he looked from
 grief to God,
 And could not see Him!—wretched
 Lucifer!
Adam How he stands—yet an
 angel!
Earth Spirits I wail—wail!

Luc (after a pause) Dost thou remember, Adam, when the curse Took us in Eden? On a mountain-peak
 Half-sheathed in primal woods and glittering
 In spasms of awful sunshine, at that hour
 A lion couched,—part raised upon his paws,
 With his calm, massive face turned full on thine,
 And his mane listening When the ended curse
 Left silence in the world,—right suddenly
 He sprang up rampant and stood straight and stiff,
 As if the new reality of death
 Were dashed against his eyes,—and roared so fierce
 (Such thick carnivorous passion in his throat
 Tearing a passage through the wrath and fear)—
 And roared so wild, and smote from all the hills
 Such fast, keen echoes crumbling down the vales
 Precipitately,—that the forest beasts,
 One after one, did mutter a response
 In savage and in sorrowful complaint
 Which trailed along the gorges
 Then, at once,
 He fell back, and rolled crashing from the height
 Into the dusk of pines
Adam It might have been
 I heard the curse alone
Earth Spirits I wail, I wail!
Luc That lion is the type of what I am!
 And as he fixed thee with his full-faced hate,
 And roared, O Adam, comprehending doom,
 So, gazing on the face of the Unseen,
 I cry out here between the Heavens and earth
 My conscience of this sin, this woe, this wrath,
 Which damn me to this depth
Earth Spirits I wail, I wail!
Eve I wail—O God!
Luc I scorn you that ye wail,

Who use your petty griefs for pedestals
 To stand on, beckoning pity from without,
 And deal in pathos of antithesis
 Of what ye were forsooth, and what ye are,—
 I scorn you like an angel! Yet, one cry
 I, too, would drive up like a column erect,
 Marble to marble, from my heart to Heaven,
 A monument of anguish to transpire
 And overtop your vapoury complaints
 Expressed from feeble woes!
Earth Spirits I wail, I wail!
Luc For, O ye Heavens, ye are my witnesses,
 That I, struck out from nature in a blot,
 The outcast and the mildew of things good,
 The leper of angels, the excepted dust
 Under the common rain of daily gifts,—
 I the snake, I the tempter, I the cursed,—
 To whom the highest and the lowest alike
 Say, "Go from us—we have no need of thee"—
 Was made by God like others Good and fair,
 He did create me!—ask Him, if not fair!
 Ask, if I caught not fair and silverly
 His blessing for chief angels on my head
 Until it grew there, a crown crystalized!
 Ask, if He never called me by my name,
Lucifer—kindly said as "Gabriel"—
Lucifer—soft as "Michael!" while serene
 I, standing in the glory of the lamps,
 Answered "my Father," innocent of shame
 And of the sense of thunder Ha! ye think,
 White angels in your niches,—I repent,—
 And would tread down my own offences, back

To service at the footstool? *That's*
 read wrong!
 I cry as the beast did, that I may cry—
 Expansive, not appealing! Fallen
 so deep
 Against the sides of this prodigious
 pit,
 I cry—cry—dashing out the hands of
 wail,
 On each side, to meet anguish every-
 where,
 And to attest it in the ecstasy
 And exaltation of a woe sustained
 Because provoked and chosen
 Pass along
 Your wilderness, vain mortals!
 Puny griefs
 In transitory shapes, be henceforth
 dwarfed
 To your own conscience, by the dread
 extremes
 Of what I am and have been If ye
 have fallen,
 It is a step's fall,—the whole ground
 beneath
 Strewn woolly soft with promise! if
 ye have sinned,
 Your prayers tread high as angels!
 if ye have grieved,
 Ye are too mortal to be pitiable,
 The power to die disproves the right
 to grieve
 Go to! ye call this ruin? I half-scorn
 The ill I did you! Were ye wronged
 by me,
 Hated and tempted, and undone of
 me,—
 Still, what's your hurt to mine of
 doing hurt,
 Of hating, tempting, and so ruining?
 This sword's *hilt* is the sharpest, and
 cuts through
 The hand that wields it
 Go—I curse you all
 Hate one another—feebly—as ye can,
 I would not certes cut you short in
 hate—
 Far be it from me! hate on as ye can!
 I breathe into your faces, spirits of
 earth,
 As wintry blast may breathe on wintry
 leaves,
 And lifting up their brownness show
 beneath
 The branches bare—Beseech you,
 spirits, give

To Eve who beggarly entreats your
 love
 For her and Adam when they shall
 be dead,
 An answer rather fitting to the sin
 Than to the sorrow—as the Heavens,
 I trow,
 For justice' sake, gave theirs
 I curse you both,
 Adam and Eve! Say grace as after
 meat,
 After my curses May your tears fall
 hot
 On all the hissing scorns o' the crea-
 tures here—
 And yet rejoice Increase and mul-
 tiply,
 Ye and your generations, in all
 plagues
 Corruptions melancholies, poverties,
 And hideous forms of life and fears of
 death,—
 The thought of death being alway
 eminent
 Immovable and dreadful in your
 life,
 And deafly and dumbly insignificant
 Of any hope beyond,—as death
 itself—
 Whichever of you lieth dead the first,—
 Shall seem to the survivor—yet
 rejoice!
 My curse catch at you strongly, body
 and soul
 And He find no redemption—nor
 the wing
 Of seraph move your way—and yet
 rejoice!
 Rejoice,—because ye have not set in
 you
 This hate which shall pursue you—
 this fire-hate
 Which glares without, because it
 burns within—
 Which kills from ashes—this poten-
 tial hate,
 Wherein I, angel, in antagonism
 To God and His reflex beatitudes,
 Moan ever in the central universe
 With the great woe of striving against
 Love—
 And gasp for space amid the Infinite—
 And toss for rest amid the Desertness—
 Self-orphaned by my will, and self-
 elect
 To kingship of resistant agony

Toward the Good 'round me—hating
good and love,
And willing to hate good and to hate
love
And willing to will on so evermore,
Scorning the Past, and damning the
To come—

Go and rejoice ! I curse you !
[LUCIFER vanishes]

Earth Spirits

And we scorn you ! there's no
pardon

Which can lean to you aright
When your bodies take the
guerdon

Of the death-curse in our sight,
Then the bee that hummeth lowest
shall transcend you

Then ye shall not move an eyelid
Though the stars look down
your eyes,

And the earth which ye defiled
Shall expose you to the skies —

“Lo ! these kings of ours—who
sought to comprehend you”

First Spirit

And the elements shall boldly
All your dust to dust constrain !
Unresistedly and coldly

I will smite you with my rain !
From the slowest of my frosts is no
receding

Second Spirit

And my little worm, appointed
To assume a royal part
He shall reign crowned and
anointed,

O'er the noble human heart !
Give him counsel against losing of
that Eden !

Adam Do ye scorn us ? Back
your scorn

Toward your faces grey and lorn,
As the wind drives back the rain,
Thus I drive with passion strife,
I who stand beneath God's sun,
Made like God, and, though
undone,

Not unmade for love and life
Lo ! ye utter threats in vain !
By my free will that chose sin,
By mine agony within
Round the passage of the fire,—
By the pinings which disclose

That my native soul is higher
Than what it chose,—

We are yet too high, O spirits, for
your disdain

Eve Nay, beloved ! If these be
low,

We confront them with no height !
We have stooped down to their
level

By infecting them with evil,
And their scorn that meets our
blow

Scathes aright
Amen Let it be so

Earth Spirits

We shall triumph—triumph
greatly

When ye lie beneath the
sword !

There, our lily shall grow stately
Though ye answer not a word—
And her fragrance shall be scornful of
your silence,

While your throne ascending
calmly

We, in herdom of your soul,
Flash the river lift the palm-tree,
The dilated ocean roll

With the thoughts that throbbed
within you—round the islands.

Alp and torrent shall inherit

Your significance of will,
With the grandeur of your
spirit,
Shall our broad savannahs
fill

In our winds, your exultations shall
be springing !

Even your par lance which in-
veigles,

By our rudeness shall be won,
Hearts poetic in our eagles
Shall beat up against the sun
And pour downward in articulate
clear singing

Your bold speeches, our Behe-
moth

With his thunderous jaw shall
wield !

Your high fancies, shall our
Mammoth

Breathe sublimely up the
shield

Of St Michael, at God's throne, who
wants to speed him!
Till the heaven's smooth-
grooved thunder
Spinning back, shall leave them
clear,
And the angels smiling wonder
With dropt looks from sphere
to sphere,
Shall cry, "Ho, ye heirs of Adam!
ye exceed him!"
Adam Root out thine eyes, sweet,
from the dreary ground
Beloved, we may be overcome by God,
But not by *these*

Eve By God, perhaps, in *these*
Adam I think, not so Had God
foredoomed despair,
He had not spoken hope He may
destroy,

Certes, but not deceive

Eve Behold this rose!
I plucked it in our bower of Paradise
This morning as I went forth, and
my heart

Has beat against its petals all the
day

I thought it would be always red and
full

As when I plucked it—*Is it?*—ye
may see!

I cast it down to you that ye may see
All of you!—count the petals lost of
it—

And note the colours faded! ye
may see!

And I am as it is, who yesterday
Grew in the same place O ye
Spirits of earth!

I almost, from my miserable heart,
Could here upbraid you for your
cruel heart,

Which will not let me, down the
slope of death,

Draw any of your pity after me,
Or lie still in the quiet of your looks,
As my flower, there, in mine

[*A bleak wind, quickened with indistinct
human voices, spins around the earth-
zodiac, filling the circle with its
presence, and then wailing off into
the east, carries the rose away with
it EVE falls upon her face ADAM
stands erect*

Adam So, verily,
The last departs

Eve So Memory follows Hope,
And Life both Love said to me,
"Do not die,"

And I replied, "O Love, I will not die
I exiled and I will not orphan Love"
But now it is no choice of mine to die—
My heart throbs from me

Adam Call it straightway back
Death's consummation crowns com-
pleted life,

Or comes too early Hope being set
on thee

For others, if for others, then for
thee,—

For thee and me

[*The wind revolves from the east, and
round again to the east, perfumed
by the Eden rose, and full of voices
which sweep out into articulation as
they pass*

Let thy soul shake its leaves,
To feel the mystic wind—Hark!

Eve I hear life

Infant voices passing in the wind

O we live, O we live—

And this life we receive,

Is a warm thing and a new,

Which we softly bud into

From the heart and from the
brain—

Something strange that overmuch
is

Of the sound and of the sight,
Flowing round in trickling
touches,

With a sorrow and delight,—
Yet is it all in vain?

Rock us softly,
Lest it be all in vain

Youthful voices passing

O we live, O we live—

And this life that we achieve

Is a loud thing and a bold,

Which with pulses manifold

Strikes the heart out full and
fain—

Active doer, noble liver,

Strong to struggle, sure to con-
quer,—

Though the vessel's prow will
quiver

At the lifting of the anchor

Yet do we strive in vain?

Infant voices passing

Rock us softly,

Lest it be all in vain

Poet voices passing

O we live, O we live—

And this life that we conceive
Is a clear thing and a fair,
Which we set in crystal air
That its beauty may be plain
With a breathing and a flooding
Of the heaven-life on the whole,
While we hear the forests budding
To the music of the soul—
Yet is it tuned in vain ?

Infant voices passing

Rock us softly,

Lest it be all in vain

Philosophic voices passing

O we live, O we live—

And this life that we perceive,
Is a great thing and a grave,
Which for others' use we have,
Duty-laden to remain
We are helpers, fellow-creatures,
Of the right against the
wrong—

We are earnest-hearted teachers,
Of the truth which maketh
strong—

Yet do we teach in vain ?

Infant voices passing

Rock us softly,

Lest it be all in vain

Revel voices passing

O we live O we live—

And this life that we reprove,
Is a low thing and a light
Which is jested out of sight,
And made worthy of disdain !
Strike with bold electric laughter
The high tops of things divine—
Turn thy head, my brother after,
Lest thy tears fall in my
wine,—

For is all laughed in vain ?

Infant voices passing

Rock us softly,

Lest it be all in vain

Eve I hear a sound of life—of life
like ours—

Of laughter and of wailing,—of grave
speech,

Of little plaintive voices innocent,—
Of life in separate courses flowing out
Like our four rivers to some outward
main

I hear life—life !

Adam And, so, thy cheeks have
snatched

Scarlet to paleness, and thine eyes
drink fast

Of glory from full cups, and thy
moist lips

Seem trembling, both of them, with
earnest doubts

Whether to utter words or only
smile

Eve Shall I be mother of the
coming life ?

Hear the steep generations, how
they fall

Adown the visionary stairs of Time,
Like supernatural thunders—far, yet
near—

Sowing the fiery echoes through the
hills

Am I a cloud to these—mother to
these ?

Earth Spirits And bringer of the
curse upon all these

[*Eve sinks down again*]

Poet voices passing

O we live, O we live—

And this life that we conceive,
Is a noble thing and high,

Which we climb up loftily
To view God without a stain,
Till, recoiling where the shade is,

We retread our steps again,
And descend to gloomy Hades

To resume man's mortal pain
Shall it be climbed in vain ?

Infant voices passing

Rock us softly,

Lest it be all in vain

Love voices passing

O we live, O we live—

And this life we would retrieve,
Is a faithful thing apart

Which we love in, heart to heart,
Until one heart fitteth twain

" Wilt thou be one with me ? "

" I will be one with thee ! "

" Ha, ha !—we love and live ! "

Alas ! ye love and die !

Shriek—who shall reply ?

For is it not loved in vain ?

Infant voices passing

Rock us softly,

Though it be all in vain

Aged voices passing

O we live, O we live—

And this life we would survive,
Is a gloomy thing and brief,
Which consummated in grief,
Leaveth ashes for all gain—
Is it not *all* in vain ?

Infant voices passing

Rock us softly,
Though it be *all* in vain
[*Voices die away*]

Earth Spirits And bringer of the
curse upon all these

Eve The voices of foreshown
Humanity

Die off,—so let me die

Adam So let us die
When God's will soundeth the right
hour of death

Earth Spirits And bringer of the
curse upon all these

Eve O spirits ! by the gentleness
ye use

In winds at night, and floating clouds
at noon,—

In gliding waters under lily-leaves,—
In chirp of crickets, and the settling
hush

A bird makes in her nest with feet
and wings,—

Fulfil your natures now !

Earth Spirits

Agreed, allowed !

We gather out our natures like a
cloud,

And thus fulfil their lightnings !
Thus, and thus !

Hearken, O hearken to us !

First Spirit

As the storm-wind blows bleakly in
the norland,—

As the snow-wind beats blindly on
the moorland,—

As the simoom drives wild across the
desert —

As the thunder roars deep in the
Unmeasured,—

As the torrent tears an ocean-world
to atoms,—

As the whirlpool grinds fathoms be-
low fathoms,—

Thus,—and thus !

Second Spirit

As the yellow toad, that spits its
poison chilly,—

As the tiger, in the jungle crouching
stilly —

As the wild boar, with ragged tusks
of anger,—

As the wolf-dog, with teeth of glitter-
ing clangour,—

As the vultures that scream against
the thunder,—

As the owlets that sit and moan
asunder,—

Thus,—and thus !

Eve Adam ! God !

Adam Cruel, unrelenting Spirits !

By the power in me of the sovran soul
Whose thoughts keep pace yet with
the angels' march,

I charge you into silence—trample you
Down to obedience—I am king of
you !

Earth Spirits Ha ha ! thou art
king !

With a sun for a crown,
And a soul undone !

Thou, the antagonised,
Tortured and agonised,

Held in the ring
Of the zodiac !

Now, king, beware !

We are many and strong .

Whom thou standest among,—
And we press on the air,

And we stifle thee back
And we multiply where
Thou wouldst trample us down

From rights of our own
To an utter wrong—

And, from under the feet of thy scorn,
O forlorn !

We shall spring up like corn,
And our stubble be strong

Adam God, there is power in
Thee ! I make appeal

Unto Thy kingship

Eve There is pity in THEE,
O sinned against, great God !—My
Seed, my Seed,

There is hope set on THEE—I cry to
Thee

Thou mystic seed that shalt be !—
leave us not

In agony beyond what we can
bear

Fallen in debasement below thunder-
mark,

A mark for scorning—taunted and
perplexed

By all these creatures we ruled yesterday,
 Whom thou Lord, rulest alway O my Seed,
 Through the tempestuous years that rain so thick
 Betwixt my ghostly vision and Thy face,
 Let me have token ! for my soul is bruised
 Before the serpent's head
[A vision of CHRIST appears in the midst of the zodiac, which pales before the heavenly light The Earth Spirits grow greyer and fainter]
 CHRIST I AM HERE !
 Adam This is God !—Curse us not, God, any more
 Eve But gazing so—so—with omnific eyes,
 Lift my soul upward till it touch Thy feet !
 Or lift it only,—not to seem too proud,—
 To the low height of some good angel's feet,
 For such to tread on, when he walketh straight
 And Thy lips praise him
 CHRIST Spirits of the earth,
 I meet you with rebuke for the reproach
 And cruel and unmitigated blame
 Ye cast upon your masters True, they have sinned,
 And true, their sin is reckoned into loss
 For you the sinless Yet, your innocence,
 Which of you praises ? since God made your acts
 Inherent in your lives, and bound your hands
 With instincts and imperious sanctities,
 From self-defacement ? Which of you disdains
 These sinners who in falling proved their height
 Above you by their liberty to fall ?
 And which of you complains of loss by them,
 For whose delight and use ye have your life
 And honour in creation ? Ponder it !
 This regent and sublime Humanity

Though fallen, exceeds you ! this shall film your sun
 Shall hunt your lightning to its lair of cloud
 Turn back your rivers, footpath all your seas,
 Lay flat your forests, master with a look
 Your lion at his fasting, and fetch down
 Your eagle flying Nay, without this law
 Of mandom, ye would perish,—beast by beast
 Devouring—tree by tree, with strangling roots
 And trunks set tuskwise Ye would gaze on God
 With imperceptive blankness up the stars,
 And mutter, " Why, God, hast Thou made us thus ? "
 And pining to a shallow idioecy
 Stagger up blindly against the ends of life,
 Then stagnate into rottenness and drop
 Heavily—poor, dead matter—piece-meal down
 The abysmal spaces—like a little stone
 Let fall to chaos Therefore over you,
 Receive man's sceptre,—therefore be content
 To minister with voluntary grace
 And melancholy pardon, every rite
 And function in you, to the human hand
 Be ye to man as angels be to God,
 Servants in pleasure, singers of delight,
 Suggesters to his soul of higher things
 Than any of your highest So at last,
 He shall look round on you with lids too straight
 To hold the grateful tears, and thank you well,
 And bless you when he prays his secret prayers,
 And praise you when he sings his open songs
 For the clear song-note he has learnt in you
 Of purifying sweetness, and extend
 Across your head his golden fantasies
 Which glorify you into soul from sense !

Go, serve him for such price That not in vain	Of comforting for ill, and teaching good,
Nor yet ignobly ye shall serve, I place My word here for an oath, mine oath for act	And reconciling all that ill and good Unto the patience of a constant hope —
To be hereafter In the name of which	Rise with thy daughters! If sin came by thee,
Perfect redemption and perpetual grace,	And by sin, death—the ransom- righteousness
I bless you through the hope and through the peace	The heavenly life and compensative rest
Which are mine,—to the Love, which is myself	Shall come by means of thee If woe by thee
<i>Eve</i> Speak on still, Christ <i>Al-</i> <i>bert</i> Thou bless me not	Had issue to the world, thou shalt go forth
In set words, I am blessed in hearken- ing Thee—	An angel of the woe thou didst achieve,
Speak, Christ	Found acceptable to the world in- stead
<i>CHRIST</i> Speak, Adam Bless the woman, man—	Of others of that name, of whose bright steps
It is thine office	Thy deed stripped bare the hills Be satisfied,
<i>Adam</i> Mother of the world, Take heart before this Presence Lo! my voice,	Something thou hast to bear through womanhood,
Which, naming erst the creatures, did express	Peculiar suffering answering to the sin,—
(God breathing through my breath) the attributes	Some pang paid down for each new human life,
And instincts of each creature in its name,	Some weariness in guarding such a life,
Floats to the same afflatus,—floats and heaves	Some coldness from the guarded, some mistrust
Like a water-weed that opens to a wave,—	From those thou hast too well served, from those beloved
A full-leaved prophecy affecting thee Out fairly and wide Henceforward, rise, aspire	Too loyally some treason, feebleness Within thy heart, and cruelty with- out,
To all the calms and magnanimities, The lofty uses and the noble ends, The sanctified devotion and full work,	And pressures of an alien tyranny With its dynastic reasons of larger bones
To which thou art elect for evermore, First woman, wife, and mother	And stronger sinews But, go to! thy love
<i>Eve</i> And first in sin	Shall chant itself its own beatitudes, After its own life-working A child's kiss
<i>Adam</i> And also the sole bearer of the Seed	Set on thy sighing lips, shall make thee glad,
Whereby sin dieth! Raise the ma- jestic	A poor man served by thee, shall make thee rich,
Of thy disconsolate brows, O well-be- loved,	A sick man helped by thee, shall make thee strong,
And front with level eyelids the To come,	Thou shalt be served thyself by every sense
And all the dark o' the world Rise, woman, rise	Of service which thou renderest Such a crown
To thy peculiar and best altitudes Of doing good and of enduring ill,—	

I set upon thy head,—Christ witness-
 ing
 With looks of prompting love—to
 keep thee clear
 Of all reproach against the sin fore-
 gone,
 From all the generations which suc-
 ceed
 Thy hand which plucked the apple,
 I clasp close,—
 Thy lips which spake wrong counsel,
 I kiss close —
 I bless thee in the name of Paradise
 And by the memory of Edenic joys
 Forfeited and lost,—by that last cy-
 press tree
 Green at the gate, which thrilled as
 we came out,
 And by the blessed nightingale which
 threw
 Its melancholy music after us,—
 And by the flowers, whose spirits full
 of smells
 Did follow softly, plucking us be-
 hind
 Back to the gradual banks and vernal
 bowers
 And fourfold river-courses —By all
 these
 I bless thee to the contraricks of these,—
 I bless thee to the desert and the
 thorns,
 To the elemental change and turbu-
 lence,
 And to the roar of the estranged
 beasts,
 And to the solemn dignities of grief,—
 To each one of these ends,—and to
 their END
 Of Death and the hereafter !
Eve I accept
 For me and for my daughters this
 high part
 Which lowly shall be counted Noble
 work
 Shall hold me in the place of garden-
 rest,
 And in the place of Eden's lost delight
 Worthy endurance of permitted pain,
 While on my longest patience there
 shall wait
 Death's speechless angel, smiling in
 the east
 Whence cometh the cold wind I
 bow myself
 Humbly henceforward on the ill I did,

B P

That humbleness may keep it in the
 shade
 Shall it be so ? Shall I smile saying
 so ?
 O Seed ! O King ! O God, Who *shalt*
 be Seed,—
 What shall I say ? As Eden's foun-
 tains swelled
 Brightly betwixt their banks, so
 swells my soul
 Betwixt Thy love and power !
 And, sweetest thoughts
 Of foregone Eden ! now, for the first
 time
 Since God said " Adam," walking
 through the trees,
 I dare to pluck you, as I plucked ere-
 while
 The hly or pink, the rose or heliotrope
 So pluck I you—so largely—with both
 hands,—
 And throw you forward on the outer
 earth
 Wherein we are cast out, to sweeten
 it
Adam As Thou, Christ, to illumine
 it, holdest Heaven
 Broadly above our heads

[The CHRIST is gradually transfigured
 during the following phrases of dia-
 logue, into humanity and suffering

Eve O Saviour Christ,
 Thou standest mute in glory, like the
 sun
Adam We worship in Thy silence,
 Saviour Christ
Eve Thy brows grow grander
 with a forecast woe,—
 Diviner, with the possible of Death !
 We worship in Thy sorrow, Saviour
 Christ
Adam How do Thy clear, still
 eyes transpierce our souls,
 As gazing *through* them toward the
 Father-throne
 In a pathetic, full Deity,
 Serenely as the stars gaze through the
 air
 Straight on each other
Eve O pathetic Christ,
 Thou standest mute in glory, like the
 moon
 CHRIST Eternity stands alway
 fronting God,
 A stern colossal image, with blind eyes

N

And grand dim lips that murmur
 evermore
 "God, God, God!" while the rush of
 life and death,
 The roar of act and thought, of evil
 and good,
 The avalanches of the ruining worlds
 Tolling down space,—the new worlds'
 genesis
 Budding in fire,—the gradual hum-
 ming growth
 Of the ancient atoms and first forms
 of earth,
 The slow procession of the swathing
 seas
 And firmamental waters,—and the
 noise
 Of the broad, fluent strata of pure
 airs,—
 All these flow onward in the intervals
 Of that reiterant, solemn sound of—
 God!
 Which word, innumerable angels
 straightway lift
 High on celestial altitudes of song
 And choral adoration and then drop
 The burden softly, shutting the last
 notes
 In silver wings Howbeit in the noon
 of time,
 Eternity shall wax as dumb as
 Death
 While a new voice beneath the spheres
 shall cry
 "God! why hast Thou forsaken Me,
 My God?"
 And not a voice in Heaven shall an-
 swer it

[*The transfiguration is complete in sadness*
Adam Thy speech is of the
 Heavens, yet, O Christ,
 Awfully human are Thy voice and
 face!
Eve My nature overcomes me
 from Thine eyes
 CHRIST In the set noon of time,
 shall one from Heaven,
 An angel fresh from looking upon
 God,
 Descend before a woman, blessing her
 With perfect benediction of pure
 love,
 For all the world in all its elements,
 For all the creatures of earth, air, and
 sea,

For all men in the body and in the
 soul,
 Unto all ends of glory and sanctity
Eve O pale, pathetic Christ—I
 worship Thee!
 I thank Thee for that woman!
 CHRIST Then, at last,
 I, wrapping round Me your humanity,
 Which, being sustained, shall neither
 break nor burn
 Beneath the fire of Godhead, will
 tread earth,
 And ransom you and it, and set
 strong peace
 Betwixt you and its creatures With
 My pangs
 I will confront your sins, and since
 those sins
 Have sunken to all Nature's heart
 from yours,
 The tears of My clean soul shall fol-
 low them
 And set a holy passion to work clear
 Absolute consecration In My brow
 Of kingly whiteness, shall be crowned
 anew
 Your discredited human nature
 Look on Me!
 As I shall be uplifted on a cross
 In darkness of eclipse and anguish
 dread,
 So shall I lift up in My pierced hands,
 Not into dark, but light—not unto
 death,
 But life,—beyond the reach of guilt
 and grief,
 The whole creation Henceforth in
 My name
 Take courage, O thou woman,—man,
 take hope!
 Your grave shall be as smooth as
 Eden's sward,
 Beneath the steps of your prospective
 thoughts,
 And, one step past it, a new Eden-
 gate
 Shall open on a hinge of harmony,
 And let you through to mercy Ye
 shall fall
 No more, within that Eden, nor pass
 out
 Any more from it In which hope,
 move on,
 First sinners and first mourners Live
 and love —
 Doing both nobly, because lowly!

Live and work, strongly,—because
patiently !

And, for the deed of death, trust it to
God

That it be well done, unrepented of,
And not to loss And thence, with
constant prayers

Fasten your souls so high, that con-
stantly

The smile of your heroic cheer may
float

Above all floods of earthly agonies
Purification being the joy of pain !

[*The vision of CHRIST vanishes ADAM
and EVE stand in an ecstasy The
earth zodiac pales away shade by
shade, as the stars, star by star, shine
out in the sky, and the following
chant from the two Earth Spirits (as
they sweep back into the zodiac and
disappear with it) accompanies the
process of change*

Earth Spirits

By the mighty Word thus spoken

Both for living and for dying,

We, our homage-oath once broken,

Fasten back again in sighing ,

And the creatures and the elements
renew their covenanting

Here, forgive us all our scorning ,

Here, we promise milder duty

And the evening and the morning

Shall re-organise in beauty

A Sabbath day in Sabbath joy, for uni-
versal chanting

And if, still, this melancholy

May be strong to overcome us ,

If this mortal and unholy,

We still fail to cast out from
us,—

If we turn upon you, unaware, your
own dark influences,—

If ye tremble when surrounded

By our forest pine and palm
trees,

If we cannot cure the wounded

With our gum trees and our
balm trees,

And if your souls all mournfully sit
down among your senses,—

Yet, O mortals, do not fear us,

We are gentle in our languor ,

And more good ye shall have
near us,

Than any pain or anger ,

And our God's refracted blessing, in
our blessing shall be given !

By the desert's endless vigil,

We will solemnise your passions ,

By the wheel of the black eagle

We will teach you exaltations,

When he sails against the wind, to the
white spot up in Heaven

Ye shall find us tender nurses

To your weariness of nature ,

And our hands shall stroke the
curse's

Dreary furrows from the crea-
ture,

Till your bodies shall lie smooth in
death, and straight and slumber-
ful

Then, a couch we will provide you,

Where no summer heats shall
dazzle,

Strewing on you and beside you

Thyme and rosemary and
basil—

And the yew tree shall grow overhead
to keep all safe and cool

Till the Holy blood awaited

Shall be chrism around us run-
ning,

Whereby, newly consecrated,

We shall leap up in God's sun-
ning,

To join the spheric company where
purer worlds assemble ,

While, renewed by new evangels,

Soul-consummated, made glori-
ous

Ye shall brighten past the angels,
Ye shall kneel to Christ victori-
ous,

And the rays around His feet beneath
your sobbing lips shall tremble

[*The phantastic vision has all passed , the
earth-zodiac has broken like a belt,
and is dissolved from the desert The
Earth Spirits vanish, and the stars
shine out above*

CHORUS OF INVISIBLE ANGELS,

While ADAM and EVE advance into the
desert, hand in hand

Hear our heavenly promise

Through your mortal passion !

Love, ye shall have from us,

In a pure relation !

As a fish or bird
 Swims or flies, if moving,
 We, unseen, are heard
 To live on by loving
 Far above the glances
 Of your eager eyes,
 Listen! we are loving!
 Listen, through man's ignorances—
 Listen, through God's mysteries—
 Listen down the heart of things,
 Ye shall hear our mystic wings
 Murmurous with loving!
 Through the opal door
 Listen evermore
 How we live by loving

First Semichorus

When your bodies therefore
 Reach the grave their goal,
 Softly will we care for
 Each enfranchised soul!
 Softly and unlothly,
 Through the door of opal
 Toward the Heavenly people,
 Floated on a minor fine
 Into the full chant divine,
 We will draw you smoothly,—
 While the human in the minor
 Makes the harmony diviner!
 Listen to our loving!

Second Semichorus

There, a sough of glory
 Shall breathe on you as you come,
 Ruffling round the doorway
 All the light of angeldom!
 From the empyrean centre
 Heavenly voices shall repeat,
 "Souls redeemed and pardoned, enter,
 For the chrism on you is sweet!"
 And every angel in the place
 Lowly shall bow his face,
 Folded fair on softened sounds,
 Because upon your hands and feet
 He images his Master's wounds!
 Listen to our loving!

First Semichorus

So in the universe's
 Consummated undoing,
 Our seraphs of white mercies
 Shall hover round the ruin!
 Their wings shall stream upon the
 flame
 As if incorporate of the same
 In elemental fusion,
 And calm their faces shall burn out
 With a pale and mastering thought

And a steadfast looking of desire
 From out between the clefts of fire,—
 While they cry, in the Holy's name,
 To the final Restitution!
 Listen to our loving!

Second Semichorus

So, when the day of God is
 To the thick graves accompted,
 Awaking the dead bodies
 The angel of the trumpet
 Shall split and shatter the earth
 To the roots of the grave,
 Which never before were slackened,
 And quicken the charnel birth
 With his blast so clear and brave
 Till the Dead shall start and stand
 erect,
 And every face of the burial-place
 Shall the awful single look reflect,
 Wherewith he them awakened
 Listen to our loving!

First Semichorus

But wild is the horse of Death!
 He will leap up wild at the clamour
 Above and beneath,
 And where is his Tamer
 On that last day,
 When he crieth, "Ha, ha!"
 To the trumpet's blare
 And paweth the earth's Aceldama?
 When he tosseth his head,
 The drear-white steed,
 And ghastly champeth the last
 moon-ray,—
 What angel there
 Can lead him away,
 That the living may rule for the Dead?

Second Semichorus

Yet a TAMER shall be found!
 One more bright than seraph crowned,
 And more strong than cherub bold,
 Elder too, than angel old,
 By His grey eternities!
 He shall master and surprise
 The steed of Death,
 For He is strong, and He is fain
 He shall quell him with a breath,
 And shall lead him where He will,
 With a whisper in the ear,
 Full of fear—
 And a hand upon the mane,
 Grand and still

First Semichorus

Through the flats of Hades where the
 souls assemble

He will guide the Death-steed calm
between their ranks,
While, like beaten dogs, they a little
moan and tremble
To see the darkness curdle from the
horse's glittering flanks
Through the flats of Hades where the
dreary shade is,—
Up the steep of Heaven, will the
Tamer guide the steed,—
Up the spheric circles—circle above
circle,
We who count the ages, shall count
the tolling tread—
Every hoof-fall striking a blinder,
blanker sparkle
From the stony orbs, which shall show
as they were dead

Second Semichorus

All the way the Death-steed with toll-
ing hoofs shall travel
Ashen grey the planets shall be mo-
tionless as stones,
Loosely shall the systems eject their
parts coeval—
Stagnant in the spaces, shall float the
pallid moons,
Suns that touch their apogees, reeling
from their level,
Shall run back on their axles, in wild,
low, broken tunes

Chorus

Up against the arches of the crystal
ceiling,
Shall the horse's nostrils steam the
blurring breath,
Up between the angels pale with
silent feeling,
Will the Tamer, calmly, lead the
horse of Death

Semichorus

Cleaving all that silence, cleaving all
that glory,
Will the Tamer lead him straightway
to the Throne,
"Look out, O Jehovah, to this I
bring before Thee
With a hand nail-pierced,—I, who
am Thy Son"
Then the Eye Divinest, from the
Deepest, flaming,
On the mystic courser, shall look out
in fire!
Blind the beast shall stagger where
It overcame him,—

Meek as lamb at pasture—bloodless
in desire—
Down the beast shall shiver,—slain
amid the taming,—
And by Life essential, the phantasm
Death expire

Chorus

Listen, man, through life and death,
Through the dust and through the
breath,

Listen down the heart of things!

Ye shall hear our mystic wings

Murmurous with loving!

A Voice Gabriel, th u Gabriel!

Another Voice What wouldst
thou with me?

First Voice I heard thy voice
sound in the angels' song,

And I would give thee question

Second Voice Question me

First Voice Why have I called
thrice to my Morning Star
And had no answer? All the stars
are out,

And answer in their places Only in
vain

I cast my voice against the outer rays
Of my Star, shut in light behind the
sun!

No more reply than from a breaking
string,

Breaking when touched Or is she
not my star?

Where is my Star—my Star? Have
ye cast down

Her glory like my glory? Has she
waxed

Mortal, like Adam? Has she learnt
to hate

Like any angel?

Second Voice She is sad for thee
All things grow sadder to thee, one by
one,

Angel Chorus

Live, work on, O Earthy!

By the Actual's tension

Speed the arrow worthy

Of a pure ascension

From the low earth round you,

Reach the heights above you,

From the stripes that wound you,

Seek the loves that love you!

God's divinest burneth plain

Through the crystal diaphane

Of our loves that love you!

First Voice Gabriel, O Gabriel!

Second Voice What wouldst thou
with me ?
First Voice Is it true, O thou
Gabriel, that the crown
Of sorrow which I claimed, another
claims ?
That HE claims THAT too ?
Second Voice Lost one, it is true
First Voice That HE will be an
exile from His Heaven,
To lead those exiles homeward ?
Second Voice It is true
First Voice That HE will be an
exile by His will,
As I by mine election ?
Second Voice It is true
First Voice That I shall stand
sole exile finally,—
Made desolate for fruition ?
Second Voice It is true
First Voice Gabriel !
Second Voice I hearken
First Voice Is it true besides—
Aright true—that mine orient Star
will give
Her name of " Bright and Morning
Star " to HIM,—
And take the fairness of His virtue
back,
To cover loss and sadness ?
Second Voice It is true
First Voice Untrue, Untrue !
O Morning-Star ! O MINE !
Who sittest secret in a veil of light
Far up the starry spaces, say—*Un-
true !*
Speak but so loud as doth a wasted
moon
To Tyrrhene waters ! I am Lucifer—
[A pause Silence in the stars
All things grow sadder to me, one by
one
Angel Chorus
Exiled human creatures,
Let your hope grow larger !
Larger grows the vision
Of the new delight
From this chain of Nature's
God is the Discharger,
And the Actual's prison
Opens to your sight
Semichorus
Calm the stars and golden
In a light exceeding

What their rays have measured,
Let your hearts fulfil !
These are stars beholden
By your eyes in Eden ;
Yet, across the desert,
See them shining still

Chorus

Future joy and far light
Working such relations,—
Hear us singing gently—
Exiled is not lost !
God, above the starlight,
God, above the patience,
Shall at last present ye
Guerdons worth the cost.
Patiently enduring,
Painfully surrounded,
Listen how we love you—
Hope the uttermost—
Waiting for that curing
Which exalts the wounded,
Hear us sing above you—
EXILED BUT NOT LOST !

[The stars shine on brightly, while ADAM
and EVE pursue their way into the
far wilderness There is a sound
through the silence, as of the falling
tears of an angel

SONNETS

(1844)

THE SOUL'S EXPRESSION

WITH stammering lips and insuffi-
cient sound,
I strive and struggle to deliver right
That music of my nature, day and
night
With dream and thought and feeling,
interwound,
And only answering all the senses
round
With octaves of a mystic depth and
height,
Which step out grandly to the infinite
From the dark edges of the sensual
ground !
This song of soul I struggle to out-
bear
Through portals of the sense, sublime
and whole,
And utter all myself into the air
But if I did it—as the thunder-roll
Breaks its own cloud,—my flesh
would perish there,
Before that dread apocalypse of soul

THE SERAPH AND POET

THE seraph sings before the manifest
 God-one, and in the burning of the
 Seven,
 And with the full life of consummate
 Heaven
 Heaving beneath him like a mother's
 breast
 Warm with her first-born's slumber
 in that nest !
 The poet sings upon the earth grave-
 riven,—
 Before the naughty world soon self-
 forgiven
 For wronging him,—and in the dark-
 ness prest
 From his own soul by worldly weights
 Even so,
 Sing, seraph with the glory ! Heaven
 is high
 Sing, poet with the sorrow ! Earth is
 low
 The universe's inward voices cry
 "Amen" to either song of joy and
 woe—
 Sing, seraph,—poet,—sing on equally

ON A PORTRAIT OF WORDS-
WORTH BY B R HAYDON

WORDSWORTH upon Helvellyn ! Let
 the cloud
 Ebb audibly along the mountain-
 wind,
 Then break against the rock, and
 show behind
 The lowland valleys floating up to
 crowd
 The sense with beauty *He*, with
 forehead bowed
 And humble-lidded eyes, as one in-
 clined
 Before the sovran thought of his own
 mind,
 And very meek with inspirations
 proud,—
 Takes here his rightful place as poet-
 priest
 By the high-altar, singing prayer and
 prayer
 To the higher Heavens A noble
 vision free,
 Our Haydon's hand hath flung out
 from the mist !
 No portrait this, with Academic air—
 This is the poet and his poetry

PAST AND FUTURE

My future will not copy fair my past
 On any leaf but Heaven's Be fully
 done,
 Supernal Will ! I would not fain be
 one
 Who, satisfying thirst and breaking
 fast
 Upon the fulness of the heart, at last
 Says no grace after meat My wine
 has run
 Indeed out of my cup, and there is
 none
 To gather up the bread of my repast
 Scattered and trampled,—yet I find
 some good
 In earth's green herbs, and streams
 that bubble up
 Clear from the darkling ground,—
 content until
 I sit with angels before better food
 Dear Christ ! when Thy new vintage
 fills my cup,
 This hand shall shake no more, nor
 that wine spill

IRREPARABLENESS

I HAVE been in the meadows all the
 day
 And gathered there the nosegay that
 you see,
 Singing within myself as bird or bee
 When such do field-work on a morn of
 May
 But now I look upon my flowers,—
 decay
 Has met them in my hands more
 fatally,
 Because more warmly clasped,—and
 sobs are free
 To come instead of songs What do
 you say,
 Sweet counsellors, dear friends ? that
 I should go
 Back straightway to the fields, and
 gather more ?
 Another, sooth, may do it,—but not
 I !
 My heart is very tired—my strength
 is low—
 My hands are full of blossoms plucked
 before,
 Held dead within them till myself
 shall die

TEARS

THANK God, bless God, all ye who
suffer not
More grief than ye can weep for
That is well—
That is light grieving! lighter, none
befell,
Since Adam forfeited the primal lot
Tears! what are tears? The babe
weeps in its cot,
The mother singing,—at her marriage-
bell,
The bride weeps,—and before the
oracle
Of high-faned hills, the poet has for-
got
That moisture on his cheeks Thank
God for grace,
Ye who weep only! Though, as some
have done,
Ye grope tear-blinded, in a desert
place,
And touch but tombs,—look up!
Those tears will run
Soon, in long rivers, down the lifted
face
And leave the vision clear for stars
and sun

GRIEF

I TELL you, hopeless grief is passion-
less—
That only men incredulous of despair,
Half-taught in anguish, through the
midnight air
Beat upward to God's throne in loud
access
Of shrieking and reproach Full
desertness
In souls, as countries, lieth silent-
bare
Under the blanching, vertical eye-
glare
Of the absolute Heavens Deep-
hearted man! express
Grief for thy Dead in silence like to
death,—
Most like a monumental statue set
In everlasting watch and moveless
woe,
Till itself crumble to the dust
beneath
Touch it the marble eyelids are not
wet—
If it could weep, it could arise and go

SUBSTITUTION

WHEN some beloved voice, that was
to you
Both sound and sweetness, faileth
suddenly,
And silence against which you dare
not cry,
Aches round you like a strong disease
and new—
What hope? what help? what music
will undo
That silence to your sense? Not
friendship's sigh—
Not reason's subtle count Not
melody
Of viols, nor of pipes that Faunus
blew—
Not songs of poets, nor of nightin-
gales,
Whose hearts leap upward through
the cypress trees
To the clear moon! nor yet the spheric
laws
Self-chanted,—nor the angels' sweet
"All hails,"
Met in the smile of God Nay, none
of these
Speak THOU, availing Christ!—and
fill this pause

COMFORT

SPEAK low to me, my Saviour, low
and sweet
From out the hallelujahs, sweet and
low,
Lest I should fear and fall, and miss
Thee so
Who art not missed by any that en-
treat
Speak to me as to Mary at Thy feet—
And if no precious gums my hands
bestow,
Let my tears drop like amber, while I
go
In reach of Thy divinest voice com-
plete
In humanest affection—thus, in sooth,
To lose the sense of losing! As a
child,
Whose song-bird seeks the wood for
evermore,
Is sung to in its stead by mother's
mouth,—
Till, sinking on her breast, love-
reconciled,

He sleeps the faster that he wept before

PERPLEXED MUSIC

AFFECTIONATELY INSCRIBED TO E J

EXPERIENCE, like a pale musician, holds

A dulcimer of patience in his hand,
Whence harmonies we cannot understand

Of God's will in His worlds, the strain unfolds

In sad, perplexed minors Deathly colds

Fall on us while we hear and countermand

Our sanguine heart back from the fancy-land,

With nightingales in visionary wolds
We murmur,—“Where is any certain tune

Or measured music, in such notes as these?”—

But angels, leaning from the golden seat,

Are not so minded! their fine ear hath won

The issue of completed cadences,—

And, smiling down the stars, they whisper—SWEET

WORK

WHAT are we set on earth for? Say, to toil—

Nor seek to leave thy tending of the vines,

For all the heat o' the day, till it declines,

And Death's mild curfew shall from work assail

God did anoint thee with His odorous oil

To wrestle, not to reign, and He assigns

All thy tears over, like pure crystal-lines,

For younger fellow-workers of the soil

To wear for amulets So others shall

Take patience, labour, to their heart and hand,

From thy hand, and thy heart, and thy brave cheer,

And God's grace fructify through thee to all

The least flower, with a brimming cup, may stand,
And share its dew-drop with another near

FUTURITY

AND, O beloved voices, upon which
Ours passionately call, because ere-long

Ye brake off in the middle of that song

We sang together softly, to enrich
The poor world with the sense of love, and witch

The heart out of things evil,—I am strong,

Knowing ye are not lost for aye among

The hills, with last year's thrush
God keeps a niche

In Heaven, to hold our idols and albert

He brake them to our faces, and denied

That our close kisses should impair their white,—

I know we shall behold them raised, complete,—

The dust swept from their beauty,—glorified

New Memnons singing in the great God-light

THE TWO SAYINGS

Two sayings of the Holy Scriptures beat

Like pulses in the church's brow and breast!

And by them, we find rest in our unrest,

And heart-deep in salt tears, do you entreat

God's fellowship, as if on Heavenly seat

The first is JESUS WEPT,—whereon is prest

Full many a sobbing face that drops its best

And sweetest waters on the record sweet

And one is, where the Christ denied and scorned

LOOKED UPON PETER Oh, to render plain,

By help of having loved a little and mourned,—

That look of sovran love and sovran
pain,
Which HE Who could not sin yet
suffered, turned
On him who could reject but not sus-
tain !

THE LOOK

THE Saviour looked on Peter Ay,
no word—
No gesture of reproach ! The Heavens
serene,
Though heavy with armed justice,
did not lean
Their thunders that way The for-
saken Lord
Looked only, on the traitor None
record
What that look was, none guess !
even those who have seen
Wronged lovers loving through a
death-pang keen
Or pale-cheeked martyrs smiling to a
sword,
Have missed Jehovah at the judg-
ment-call
And Peter, from the height of blas-
phemy—
“ I never knew this man ”—did quail
and fall,
As knowing straight THAT GOD,—and
turned free
And went out speechless from the face
of all
And filled the silence, weeping bit-
terly

THE MEANING OF THE LOOK

I THINK that look of Christ might seem
to say—
“ Thou Peter ! art thou then a com-
mon stone
Which I at last must break My heart
upon,
For all God's charge to His high
angels may
Guard My foot better ? Did I yes-
terday
Wash *thy* feet, My beloved, that they
should run
Quick to deny Me 'neath the morning
sun ?—
And do thy kisses, like the rest, be-
tray ?—
The cock crows coldly—Go, and
manifest

A late contrition, but no bootless fear !
For when thy final need is dreari-
est,
Thou shalt not be denied, as I am
here—
My voice, to God and angels, shall
attest,—
*Because I know this man, let him be
clear ”*

A THOUGHT FOR A LONELY
DEATH-BED

INSCRIBED TO MY FRIEND E C

IF God compel thee to this destiny,
To die alone,—with none beside thy
bed
To ruffle round with sobs thy last
word said,
And mark with tears the pulses ebb
from thee,—
Then pray alone—“ O Christ, come
tenderly !
By Thy forsaken Sonship in the red
Drear wine-press,—by the wilder-
ness outspread,—
And the lone garden where Thine
agony
Fell bloody from Thy brow,—by all of
those
Permitted desolations comfort mine !
No earthly friend being near me, in-
terpose
No deathly angel 'twixt my face and
Thine,
But stoop Thyself to gather my life's
rose,
And smile away my mortal to
Divine ”

WORK AND CONTEMPLATION

THE woman singeth at her spinning-
wheel
A pleasant chant, ballad or barcarole
She thinketh of her song, upon the
whole,
Far more than of her flax, and yet
the reel
Is full, and artfully her fingers feel
With quick adjustment, provident
control,
The lines too subtly twisted to un-
roll,
Out to a perfect thread I hence
appeal

To the dear Christian church—that
we may do
Our Father's business in these tem-
ples mirk,
Thus, swift and steadfast,—thus, in-
tent and strong,
While, thus, apart from toil, our souls
pursue
Some high, calm, spheric tune, and
prove our work
The better for the sweetness of our
song

PAIN IN PLEASURE

A THOUGHT lay like a flower upon
mine heart,
And drew around it other thoughts
like bees
For multitude and thirst of sweet-
nesses,—
Whereat rejoicing, I desired the art
Of the Greek whistler, who to wharf
and mart
Could lure those insect swarms from
orange-trees
That I might hive with me such
thoughts, and please
My soul so, always Foolish counter-
part
Of a weak man's vain wishes ! While
I spoke,
The thought I called a flower, grew
nettle-rough—
The thoughts, called bees, stung me to
festering
“Oh, entertain” (cried Reason, as she
woke,)
“Your best and gladdest thoughts
but long enough,
And they will all prove sad enough to
sting”

AN APPREHENSION

If all the gentlest-hearted friends I
know
Concentrated in one heart their gen-
tleness,
That still grew gentler, till its pulse
was less
For life than pity,—I should yet be
slow
To bring my own heart nakedly below
The palm of such a friend, that he
should press
Motive, condition, means, appliances,
My false ideal joy and fickle woe,

Out full to light and knowledge I
should fear
Some plait between the brows—
some rougher chime
In the free voice O angels, let
your flood
Of bitter scorn dash on me ! Do ye
hear
What I say, who bear calmly all the
time
This everlasting face-to-face with
God ?

DISCONTENT

LIGHT human nature is too lightly tost
And ruffled without cause,—com-
plaining on—
Restless with rest—until, being
overthrown,
It learneth to lie quiet Let a frost
Or a small wasp have crept to the
innermost
Of our ripe peach, or let the wilful
sun
Shine westward of our window,—
straight we run
A furlong's sigh, as if the world were
lost
But what time through the heart and
through the brain
God hath transfixed us,—we, so
moved before,
Attain to a calm Ay, shouldering
weights of pain,
We anchor in deep waters, safe from
shore,
And hear, submissive, o'er the stormy
main,
God's chartered judgments walk for
evermore

PATIENCE TAUGHT BY NATURE

“O DREARY life ! ” we cry, “O dreary
life ! ”
And still the generations of the birds
Sing through our sighing, and the
flocks and herds
Serenely live while we are keeping
strife
With Heaven's true purpose in us, as
a knife
Against which we may struggle.
Ocean girds
Unslackened the dry land, savan-
nah-swards

Unweary sweep, hills watch, un-
worn, and rife
Meek leaves drop yearly from the for-
est-trees,
To show above, the unwasted stars
that pass
In their old glory O thou God of
old !
Grant me some smaller grace than
comes to *these*,—
But so much patience, as a blade of
grass
Grows by contented through the heat
and cold

CHEERFULNESS TAUGHT BY REASON

I THINK we are too ready with com-
plaint
In this fair world of God's Had we
no hope
Indeed beyond the zenith and the
slope
Of yon grey blank of sky, we might
grow faint
To muse upon eternity's constraint
Round our aspirant souls But since
the scope
Must widen early, is it well to droop,
For a few days consumed in loss and
taint ?
O pusillanimous Heart, be com-
forted,—
And, like a cheerful traveller, take the
road,
Singing beside the hedge What if
the bread
Be bitter in thine inn, and thou un-
shod
To meet the flints ?—At least it may
be said,
" Because the way is *short*, I thank
thee, God ! "

EXAGGERATION

WE overstate the ills of life, and take
Imagination, given us to bring down
The choirs of singing angels over-
shone
By God's clear glory,—down our
earth to rake
The dismal snows instead,—flake fol-
lowing flake,
To cover all the corn We walk upon
The shadow of hills across a level
thrown,

And pant like climbers Near the
alder brake
We sigh so loud, the nightingale
within
Refuses to sing loud, as else she would
O brothers ! let us leave the shame
and sin
Of taking vainly, in a plaintive mood,
The holy name of GRIER !—holy
herein,
That, by the grief of One, came all
our good

ADEQUACY

Now, by the verdure on thy thousand
hills,
Beloved England,—doth the earth
appear
Perfect enough for men to overbear
The will of God in, with rebellious
wills !
We cannot say the morning-sun fulfils
Ingloriously its course, nor that the
clear
Strong stars, without significance, in-
sphere
Our habitation We, meantime, our
ills
Heap up against this good, and lift a
cry
Against this work-day world, this ill-
spread feast,
As if ourselves were better certainly
Than what we come to Maker and
High Priest,
I ask Thee not my joys to multiply,—
Only to make me worthier of the least

TO GEORGE SAND

A DESIRE

THOU large-brained woman and large-
hearted man,
Self-called George Sand ! whose soul,
amid the lions
Of thy tumultuous senses, moans
defiance,
And answers roar for roar, as spirits
can !
I would some mild miraculous thun-
der ran
Above the applauded circus, in appli-
ance
Of thine own nobler nature's strength
and science,—
Drawing two pinions, white as wings
of swan

From thy strong shoulders, to amaze
the place
With holier light ! That thou to
woman's claim,
And man's, might'st join beside the
angel's grace
Of a pure genius sanctified from
blame,—
Till child and maiden pressed to thine
embrace,
To kiss upon thy lips a stainless fame

TO GEORGE SAND

A RECOGNITION

TRUE genius, but true woman ! dost
deny
Thy woman's nature with a manly
scorn,
And break away the gauds and arm-
lets worn
By weaker women in captivity ?
Ah, vain denial ! that revolted cry
Is sobbed in by a woman's voice for-
lorn !—
Thy woman's hair, my sister, all un-
shorn,
Floats back dishevelled strength in
agony,
Disproving thy man's name ! and
while before
The world, thou burnest in a poet-
fire,
We see thy woman-heart beat ever-
more
Through the large flame Beat
purer, heart, and higher,
Till God unsex thee on the heavenly
shore,
Where unincarnate spirits purely
aspire

THE PRISONER

I COUNT the dismal time by months
and years,
Since last I felt the green sward under
foot,
And the great breath of all things
summer-mute
Met mine upon my lips Now earth
appears
As strange to me as dreams of distant
spheres,
Or thoughts of Heaven we weep at
Nature's lute
Sounds on behind this door so closely
shut,

A strange, wild music to the prisoner's
ears,
Dilated by the distance, till the brain
Grows dim with fancies which it feels
too fine,
While ever, with a visionary pain,
Past the precluded senses, sweep and
shine
Streams, forests, glades,—and many a
golden train
Of sunlit hills, transfigured to Divine

INSUFFICIENCY

WHEN I attain to utter forth in verse
Some inward thought, my soul throbs
audibly
Along my pulses, yearning to be free
And something farther, fuller, higher,
rehearse,
To the individual, true, and the
universe,
In consummation of right harmony
But, like a wind-exposed, distorted
tree,
We are blown against for ever by the
curse
Which breathes through nature Oh,
the world is weak—
The effluence of each is false to all,
And what we best conceive, we fail to
speak
Wait, soul, until thine ashen garments
fall !
And then resume thy broken strains,
and seek
Fit peroration, without let or thrall

THE ROMAUNT OF THE PAGE

I

A KNIGHT of gallant deeds
And a young page at his side,
From the holy war in Palestine
Did slow and thoughtful ride,
As each were a palmer and told for
beads
The dews of the eventide

II

"O young page," said the knight,
"A noble page art thou !
Thou fearest not to steep in blood
The curls upon thy brow,
And once in the tent, and twice in the
fight,
Didst ward me a mortal blow "

III

"O brave knight" said the page,
 "Or ere we hither came,
 We talked in tent we talked in field,
 Of the bloody battle-game,
 But here, below this greenwood bough,
 I cannot speak the same

IV

"Our troop is far behind,
 The woodland calm is new,
 Our steeds, with slow grass-muffled
 hoofs,
 Tread deep the shadows through,
 And in my mind, some blessing kind
 Is dropping with the dew

V

"The woodland calm is pure—
 I cannot choose but have
 A thought, from these, o' the beechen-
 trees
 Which in our England wave,
 And of the little finches fine
 Which sang there while in Palestine
 The warrior-hilt we drave

VI

"Methinks, a moment gone,
 I heard my mother pray!
 I heard, sir knight, the prayer for *me*
 Wherein she passed away,
 And I know the Heavens are leaning
 down
 To hear what I shall say"

VII

The page spake calm and high,
 As of no mean degree,
 Perhaps he felt in nature's broad
 Full heart his own was free,
 And the knight looked up to his
 lifted eye,
 Then answer'd smilingly —

VIII

"Sir page, I pray your grace!
 Certes, I meant not so
 To cross your pastoral mood, Sir page,
 With the crook of the battle-bow,
 But a knight may speak of a lady's
 face,
 I ween, in any mood or place,
 If the grasses die or grow

IX

"And this I meant to say,—
 My lady's face shall shine,
 As ladies' faces use, to greet
 My page from Palestine,

Or, speak she fair or prank she gay,
 She is no lady of mine

X

"And this I meant to fear,—
 Her bower may suit thee ill!
 For, sooth, in that same field and tent,
 Thy *talk* was somewhat still,
 And fitter thy hand for my knightly
 spear,
 Than thy tongue for my lady's will"

XI

Slowly and thankfully
 The young page bowed his head,
 His large eyes seemed to muse a smile,
 Until he blushed instead,
 And no lady in her bower pardiè,
 Could blush more sudden red—
 "Sir knight,—thy lady's bower to me
 Is suited well," he said

XII

"*Beati, beati, mortui!*"
 From the convent on the sea,—
 One mile off, or scarce as nigh,
 Swells the dirge as clear and high
 As if that, over brake and lea,
 Bodily the wind did carry
 The great altar of St Mary,
 And the fifty tapers turning o'er it,
 And the Lady Abbess dead before
 it,
 And the chanting nuns whom yes-
 terweek

Her voice did charge and bless—
 Chanting steady, chanting meek,
 Chanting with a solemn breath
 Because that they are thinking less
 Upon the Dead than upon death!
 "*Beati, beati, mortui!*"
 Now the vision in the sound
 Wheeleth on the wind around—
 Now it sweepeth back, away—
 The uplands will not let it stay
 To dark the western sun
Mortui!—away at last,—
 Or ere the page's blush is past!
 And the knight heard all, and the
 page heard none

XIII

"A boon, thou noble knight,
 If ever I served thee!
 Though thou art a knight and I am a
 page,
 Now grant a boon to me—
 And tell me sooth, if dark or bright,

If little loved or loved aught
Be the face of thy ladye "

xiv

Gloomily looked the knight,—
" As a son thou hast served me
And would to none I had granted
boon,

Except to only thee!
For haply then I should love aught,
For then I should know if dark or
bright

Were the face of my ladye

xv

" Yet ill it suits my knightly tongue
To grudge that granted boon!
That heavy price from heart and life
I paid in silence down
The hand that claimed it, cleared in
fine

My father's fame I swear by mine,
That price was nobly won

xvi

" Earl Walter was a brave old earl,—
He was my father's friend
And while I rode the lists at Court,
And little guessed the end,
My noble father in his shroud,
Against a slanderer lying loud,
He rose up to defend

xvii

" Oh, calm, below the marble grey
My father's dust was strown!
Oh, meek above the marble grey
His image prayed alone!
The slanderer lied—the wretch was
brave,—

For, looking up the minster-nave,
He saw my father's knightly glaive
Was changed from steel to stone

xviii

" But Earl Walter's glaive was steel,
With a brave old hand to wear it,
And dashed the lie back in the mouth
Which hed against the godly truth
And against the knightly merit!
The slanderer, 'neath the avenger's
heel,

Struck up the dagger in appeal
From stealthy lie to brutal force—
And out upon the traitor's corse
Was yielded the true spirit

xix

" I would mine hand had fought that
fight

And justified my father!
I would mine heart had caught that
wound

And slept beside him rather!
I think it were a better thing
Than murdered friend, and marriage-
ring
Forced on my life together

xx

" Wail shook Earl Walter's house—
His true wife shed no tear—
She lay upon her bed as mute
As the earl did on his bier
Till—'Ride, ride fast,' she said at last,
'And bring the avenged's son
anear!
Ride fast—ride free, as a dart can
flee,

For white of blee with waiting for me
Is the corse in the next chambère'

xxi

" I came—I knelt beside her bed—
Her calm was worse than strife—
'My husband, for thy father dear,
Gave freely when thou wert not here
His own and eke my life
A boon! Of that sweet child we
make
An orphan for thy father's sake,
Make thou, for ours, a wife'

xxii

" I said, 'My steed neighs in the
court
My bark rocks on the brine,
And the warrior's vow I am under
now
To free the pilgrim's shrine,
But fetch the ring and fetch the
priest
And call that daughter of thine,
And rule she wide from my castle on
Nyde
While I am in Palestine'

xxiii

" In the dark chambère, if the bride
was fair,
Ye wis, I could not see,
But the steed thrice neighed, and the
priest fast prayed,
And wedded fast were we
Her mother smiled upon her bed
As at its side we knelt to wed,
And the bride rose from her knee

And kissed the smile of her mother
dead

Or ever she kissed me

XXIV

"My page, my page, what grieves thee
so,

That the tears run down thy
face?"—

"Alas, alas! mine own sister
Was in thy lady's case!
But *she* laid down the silks she wore
And followed him she wed before,
Disguised as his true servitor,
To the very battle-place"

XXV

And wept the page, and laughed the
knight,—

A careless laugh laughed he
"Well done it were for thy sister,
But not for my lady!"

My love, so please you, shall requite
No woman, whether dark or bright,
Unwomaned if she be"

XXVI

The page stopped weeping and
smiled cold—

"Your wisdom may declare
That womanhood is proved the best
By golden brooch and glossy vest
The mincing ladies wear,
Yet is it proved, and was of old,
Anear as well I dare to hold,
By truth, or by despair"

XXVII

He smiled no more, he wept no more,
But passionate he spake,—

"Oh womanly she prayed in tent,
When none beside did wake!

Oh womanly she paled in fight,
For one beloved's sake!"

And her little hand defiled with blood,
Her tender tears of womanhood
Most woman-pure did make!"

XXVIII

"—Well done it were for thy sister,
Thou tellest well her tale!

But for my lady she shall pray
I' the kirk of Nydesdale

Not dread for me but love for me
Shall make my lady pale,

No casque shall hide her woman's
tear—

It shall have room to trickle clear
Behind her woman's veil."

XXIX

"—But what if she mistook thy mind
And followed thee to strife,
Then kneeling, did entreat thy love,
As Paynims ask for life?"
"—I would forgive, and evermore
Would love her as my servitor,
But little as my wife

XXX

"Look up—there is a small bright
cloud

Alone amid the skies!
So high, so pure, and so apart,
A woman's honour lies"

The page looked up—the cloud was
sheen—

A sadder cloud did rush, I ween,
Betwixt it and his eyes

XXXI

Then dimly dropped his eyes away
From welkin unto hill—

Ha! who rides there?—the page is
'ware,

Though the cry at his heart is still!
And the page seeth all and the knight
seeth none,

Though banner and spear do fleck the
sun,

And the Saracens ride at will

XXXII

He speaketh calm, he speaketh low,—
"Ride fast my master ride,

Or ere within the broadening dark
The narrow shadows hide!"

"Yea, fast, my page, I will do so,
And keep thou at my side"

XXXIII

"Now nay, now nay, ride on thy way,
Thy faithful page precede!"

For I must loose on saddle-bow
My battle-casque that galls I trow

The shoulder of my steed,
And I must pray, as I did vow,

For one in bitter need

XXXIV

"Ere night I shall be near to thee,—
Now ride, my master, ride!"

Ere night, as parted spirits cleave
To mortals too beloved to leave,

I shall be at thy side"
The knight smiled free at the fantasy
And adown the dell did ride

xxxv

Had the knight looked up to the
 page's face
 No smile the word had won
 Had the knight looked up to the
 page's face,
 I ween he had never gone
 Had the knight looked back to the
 page's geste
 I ween he had turned aron
 For dread was the woe in the face so
 young,
 And wild was the silent geste that
 flung
 Casque, sword to earth—as the boy
 down-sprung,
 And stood—alone, alone

xxxvi

He clenched his hands as if to hold
 His soul's great agony—
 "Have I renounced my womanhood,
 For wifehood unto thee,
 And is this the last, last look of thine
 That ever I shall see ?

xxxvii

"Yet God thee save, and mayst thou
 have
 A lady to thy mind,
 Mere woman-proud and half as true
 As one thou leav'st behind !
 And God me take with Him to dwell—
 For Him I cannot love too well,
 As I have loved my kind "

xxxviii

SHE looketh up in earth's despair,
 The hopeful Heavens to seek
 That little cloud still floateth there,
 Whereof her Loved did speak
 How bright the little cloud appears !
 Her eyelids fall upon the tears,
 And the tears down either cheek

xxxix

The tramp of hoof, the flash of steel—
 The Paynims round her coming !
 The sound and sight have made her
 calm,—
 False page, but truthful woman !
 She stands amid them all unmoved
 A heart once broken by the loved
 Is strong to meet the foeman

xl

"Ho, Christian page ! art keeping
 sheep,
 From pouring wine-cups resting?"—

B P

"I keep my master's noble name,
 For warring, not for feasting,
 And if that here Sir Hubert were,
 My master brave, my master dear,
 Ye would not stay to question "

xli

"Where is thy master, scornful page,
 That we may slay or bind him ?"—
 "Now search the lea and search the
 wood,
 And see if ye can find him !
 Nathless, as hath been often tried,
 Your Paynim heroes faster ride
 Before him than behind him "

xlvi

"Give smother answers, lying page,
 Or perish in the lying"—
 "I trow that if the warrior brand
 Beside my foot, were in my hand,
 'Twere better at replying "
 They cursed her deep they smote her
 low,
 They cleft her golden ringlets
 through,
 The Loving is the Dying

xlvi

She felt the scimitar gleam down,
 And met it from beneath,
 With smile more bright in victory
 Than any sword from sheath,—
 Which flashed across her lip serene,
 Most like the spirit-light between
 The darks of life and death

xlv

"*Ingemisco, ingemisco* !"
 From the convent on the sea,
 Now it sweepeth solemnly !
 As over wood and over lea
 Bodily the wind did carry
 The great altar of St Mary,
 And the fifty tapers paling o'er it,
 And the Lady Abbess stark before
 it,

And the weary nuns, with hearts that
 faintly

Beat along their voices saintly—

"*Ingemisco, ingemisco* !"
 Dirge for abbess laid in shroud,
 Sweepeth o'er the shroudless Dead,
 Page or lady, as we said,
 With the dew upon her head,
 All as sad if not as loud

"*Ingemisco, ingemisco* !"
 Is ever a lament begun

By any mourner under sun,
Which, ere it endeth, suits but *one* ?

THE LAY OF THE BROWN ROSARY

FIRST PART

"ONORA, Onora!"—her mother is
calling,
She sits at the lattice and hears the
dew falling
Drop after drop from the sycamores
laden
With dew as with blossom, and calls
home the maiden,
"Night cometh, Onora!"

She looks down the garden-walk
caverned with trees
To the limes at the end where the
green arbour is—
"Some sweet thought or other may
keep where it found her,
While forgot or unseen in the dream
light around her,
Night cometh, Onora!"

She looks up the forest whose alleys
shoot on
Like the mute minster-aisles, when
the anthem is done
And the choristers sitting with faces
aslant
Feel the silence to consecrate more
than the chant—
"Onora, Onora!"

And forward she looketh across the
brown heath—
"Onora, art coming?"—What is it
she seeth?
Nought, nought, but the grey border-
stone that is wist
To dilate and assume a wild shape in
the mist—
'My daughter!'—Then over

The casement she leaneth, and as she
doth so,
She is 'ware of her little son playing
below
"Now where is Onora?"—He hung
down his head
And spake not, then answering
blushed scarlet-red,—
"At the tryst with her lover"

But his mother was wroth In a
sternness quoth she,
"As thou play'st at the ball, art thou
playing with me?"
When we know that her lover to
battle is gone
And the saints know above that she
loveth but one
And will ne'er wed another?"

Then the boy wept aloud 'Twas a
fair sight yet sad
To see the tears run down the sweet
blossoms he had
He stamped with his foot, said—"The
saints know I lied
Because truth that is wicked is fittest
to hide!
Must I utter it, mother?"

In his vehement childhood he hurried
within,
And knelt at her feet as in prayer
against sin,
But a child at a prayer never sobbeth
as he—
"Oh! she sits with the nun of the
brown rosary,
At nights in the ruin!"

"The old convent ruin the ivy rots off,
Where the owl hoots by day, and the
toad is sun-proof,
Where no singing-birds build, and
the trees gaunt and grey
As in stormy sea-coasts appear
blasted one way—
But is *this* the wind's doing?"

"A nun in the east wall was buried
alive,
Who mocked at the priest when he
called her to shrive,—
And shrieked such a curse as the stone
took her breath,
The old abbess fell backward and
swooned unto death
With an 'Ave' half-spoken

"I tried once to pass it, myself and
my hound,
Till, as fearing the lash, down he
shivered to ground
A brave hound, my mother! a brave
hound, ye wot!
And the wolf thought the same with
his fangs at her throat
In the pass of the Brocken

" At dawn and at eve, mother, who
sitteth there,
With the brown rosary never use I for
a prayer ?

Stoop low, mother, low ! If we went
there to see

What an ugly great hole in that east
wall must be

At dawn and at even !

" Who meet there, my mother at
dawn and at even ?

Who meet by that wall, never looking
to heaven ?

O sweetest my sister, what doeth with
thee,

The ghost of a nun with a brown
rosary

And a face turned from heaven ?

" St Agnes o'erwatcheth my dreams,
and erewhile

I have felt through mine eyelids the
warmth of her smile—

But last night, as a sadness like pity
came o'er her

She whispered—' Say *two* prayers at
dawn for Onora !

The Tempted is sinning ' "

Onora, Onora ! they heard her not
coming—

Not a step on the grass, not a voice
through the gloaming !

But her mother looked up, and she
stood on the floor

Fair and still as the moonlight that
came there before,

And a smile just beginning

It touches her lips—but it dares not
arise

To the height of the mystical sphere of
her eyes

And the large musing eyes, neither
joyous nor sorry,

Sing on like the angels in separate
glory,

Between clouds of amber

For the hair droops in clouds amber-
coloured, till stirred

Into gold by the gesture that comes
with a word,

While—O soft !—her speaking is so
interwound

Of the dim and the sweet, 'tis a twi-
light of sound

And floats through the chamber

" Since thou shrivest my brother, fair
mother," said she,

" I count on thy priesthood for marry-
ing of me

And I know by the hills that the
battle is done—

That my lover rides on—will be here
with the sun,

'Neath the eyes that behold thee "

Her mother sate silent—too tender, I
wis,

Of the smile her dead father smiled
dying to kiss,

But the boy started up pale with
tears passion wrought,—

" O wicked fair sister, the hills utter
nought !

If he cometh, who told thee ? "

" I know by the hills," she resumed
calm and clear,

" By the beauty upon them, that he
is anear

Did they ever look so since he bade
me adieu ?

Oh, love in the waking, sweet brother,
is true

As St Agnes in sleeping "

Half-ashamed and half-softened the
boy did not speak,

And the blush met the lashes which
fell on his cheek

She bowed down to kiss him—Dear
saints, did he see

Or feel on her bosom the BROWN
ROSARY—

That he shrank away weeping ?

SECOND PART

*A bed—ONORA sleeping ANGELS, but
not near*

First Angel

Must we stand so far, and she

So very fair ?

Second Angel

As bodies be

First Angel

And she so mild ?

Second Angel

As spirits when

They meeken, not to God but men

First Angel

And she so young,—that I who bring
Good dreams for saintly children,
might

Mistake that small soft face to-night[†]

And fetch her such a blessed thing
That at her waking she would weep
For childhood lost anew in sleep
How hath she sinned ?

Second Angel

In bartering love—
God's love—for man's

First Angel

We may reprove
The world for this ! not only her
Let me approach, to breathe away
This dust o' the heart with holy
air

Second Angel

Stand off ! She sleeps, and did not
pray

First Angel

Did none pray for her ?

Second Angel

Ay, a child,—
Who never, praying, wept before
While, in a mother undenied
Prayer goeth on in sleep as true
And pauseless as the pulses do

First Angel

Then I approach

Second Angel

It is not WILLED

First Angel

One word Is she redeemed ?

Second Angel

No more !

THE PLACE IS FILLED

[Angels vanish

*Evil Spirit in a Nun's garb by the
bed*

Forbear that dream—forebear that
dream ! too near to Heaven it
leaned

Onora in sleep

Nay, leave me this—but only this !
'tis but a dream, sweet fiend !

Evil Spirit

It is a thought

Onora in sleep

A sleeping thought—most innocent
of good—

It doth the Devil no harm, sweet
fiend ! it cannot, if it would

I say in it no holy hymn, I do no
holy work,

I scarcely hear the Sabbath-bell that
chumeth from the kirk

Evil Spirit

Forebear that dream—forebear that
dream !

Onora in sleep

Nav, let me dream at least
That far-off bell, it may be took for
viol at a feast

I only walk among the fields, beneath
the autumn sun,

With my dead father, hand in hand,
as I have often done

Evil Spirit

Forebear that dream—forebear that
dream !

Onora in sleep

Nay, sweet fiend, let me go—
I never more can walk with him, oh,
never more but so

For they have tied my father's feet
beneath the kirkyard stone,—

Oh, deep and straight, oh, very
straight ! they move at nights
alone

And then he calleth through my
dreams, he calleth tenderly,—

“Come forth, my daughter, my be-
loved, and walk the fields with
me !”

Evil Spirit

Forebear that dream, or else disprove
its pureness by a sign

Onora in sleep

Speak on, thou shalt be satisfied ! my
word shall answer thine

I hear a bird which used to sing when
I a child was praying,

I see the poppies in the corn I used to
sport away in —

What shall I do—tread down the
dew, and pull the blossoms
blowing ?

Or clap my wicked hands to fright the
finches from the rowan ?

Evil Spirit

Thou shalt do something harder
still Stand up where thou dost
stand,

Among the fields of Dreamland with
thy father hand in hand,

And clear and slow, repeat the vow—
declare its cause and kind,

Which, not to break in sleep or wake,
thou bearest on thy mind

Onora in sleep

I bear a vow of wicked kind, a vow for
mournful cause

I vowed it deep, I vowed it strong—
the spirits laughed applause
The spirits trailed along the pines
low laughter like a breeze,
While, high between their swinging
tops, the stars appeared to
freeze

Evil Spirit

More calm and free,—speak out to
me, why such a vow was made

Onora in sleep

Because that God decreed my death
and I shrank back afraid

Have patience, O dead father mine !
I did not fear to die,—

I wish I were a young dead child,
and had thy company !

I wish I lay beside thy feet, a buried
three-year child,

And wearing only a kiss of thine
upon my lips that smiled !

The linden-tree that covers thee
might so have shadowed twain—

For death itself I did not fear—'tis
love that makes the pain

Love feareth death I was no child
—I was betrothed that day,

I wore a troth kiss on my lips I
could not give away

How could I bear to be content and
still beneath a stone,

And feel mine own betrothed go
by—alas ! no more mine own,—

Go leading by, in wedding pomp,
some lovely lady brave,

With cheeks that blushed as red as
rose, while mine were white in
grave ?

How could I bear to sit in Heaven,
on e'er so high a throne,

And hear him say to her—to *her* !
that else he loveth none ?

Though e'er so high I sate above,
though e'er so low he spake,

As clear as thunder I would hear the
new oath he might take—

That *hers*, forsooth, are heavenly
eyes—ah me ! while very dim

Some heavenly eyes (indeed of
Heaven !) would darken down
to him

Evil Spirit

Who told thee thou wert called to
death ?

Onora in sleep

I sate all night beside thee—

The grey owl on the ruined wall shut
both his eyes to hide thee,
And ever he flapped his heavy wing
all brokenly and weak,

And the long grass waved against the
sky, around his gasping beak

I sate beside thee all the night, while
the moonlight lay forlorn,

Strewn round us like a dead world's
shroud, in ghastly fragments
torn

And through the night, and through
the hush, and over the flapping
wing,

We heard beside the Heavenly
Gate the angels murmuring —

We heard them say, ' Put day to day,
and count the days to seven,

And God will draw Onora up the
golden stairs of Heaven

And yet the Evil ones have leave
that purpose to defer

For if she has no need of Him, He has
no need of her "—

Evil Spirit

Speak out to me—speak bold and free

Onora in sleep

And then I heard thee say,—

" I count upon my rosary brown the
hours thou hast to stay !

Yet God permits us Evil ones to put
by that decree,

Since if thou hast no need of Him, He
has no need of thee—

And if thou wilt forego the sight of
angels, verily

Thy true love gazing on thy face,
shall guess what angels be—

Nor bride shall pass, save thee !
Alas !—my father's hand's a-
cold—

The meadows seem—

Evil Spirit

Forbear the dream, or let the
vow be told !

Onora in sleep

I vowed upon thy rosary brown, this
string of antique beads,

By charnel lichens overgrown, and
dank among the weeds—

This rosary brown, which is thine
own,—lost soul of buried nun,

Who, lost by vow, wouldst render
now all souls alike undone,—

I vowed upon thy rosary brown,—
and, till such vow should break,

A pledge always of living days, 'twas
hung around my neck—

I vowed to thee on rosary (Dead
father, look not so !),

*I would not thank God in my weal, nor
seek God in my woe*

Evil Spirit

And canst thou prove ?

Onora in sleep

O love—my love ! I felt him
near again !

I saw his steed on mountain-head,
I heard it on the plain !

Was this no weal for me to feel ?—is
greater weal than this ?

Yet when he came, I wept his name—
and the angels heard but *his*

Evil Spirit

Well done, well done !

Onora in sleep

Ay me ! the sun the dreamlight
'gins to pine,—

Ay me ! how dread can look the
Dead !—Aroint thee, father
mine !

She starteth from slumber, she sitteth
upright,

And her breath comes in sobs while
she stares through the night,
There is nought The great willow,
her lattice before,

Large-drawn in the moon, lieth calm
on the floor,

But her hands tremble fast as their
pulses and free

From the death-clasp close over—
the BROWN ROSARY

THIRD PART

'Tis a morn for a bridal, the merry
bride-b'ill

Rings clear through the greenwood
that skirts the chapelle,

And the priest at the altar awaiteth
the bride,

And the sacristans slyly are jesting
aside

At the work shall be doing

While down through the wood rides
that fair company,

The youths with the courtship, the
maids with the glee,—

Till the chapel-cross opens to sight,
and at once

All the maids sigh demurely and
think for the nonce

" And so endeth a wooing ! "

And the bride and the bridegroom
are leading the way,

With his hand on her rein, and a
word yet to say

Her dropt eyelids suggest the soft
answers beneath,—

And the little quick smiles come and
go with her breath,

When she sigheth or speaketh

And the tender bride-mother breaks
off unaware

From an " Ave," to think that her
daughter is fair,—

Till in nearing the chapel and glanc-
ing before

She seeth her little son stand at the
door,—

Is it play that he seeketh ?

Is it play ? when his eyes wander
innocent-wild,

And sublimed with a sadness un-
fitting a child !

He trembles not, weeps not—the
passion is done,

And calmly he kneels in their midst,
with the sun

On his head like a glory

" O fair-featured maids, ye are
many ! " he cried,—

" But, in fairness and vileness, who
matcheth the bride ?

O brave-hearted youths, ye are
many ! but whom,

For the courage and woe, can ye
match with the groom,

As ye see them before ye ? "

Out spake the bride's mother—" The
vileness is thine,

If thou shame thine own sister, a
bride at the shrine ! "

Out spake the bride's lover—" The
vileness be mine,

If he shame mine own wife at the
hearth or the shrine,

And the charge be unproved

" Bring the charge, prove the charge,
brother ! speak it aloud—

Let thy father and hers, hear it deep
in his shroud ! "

—“ O father, thou seest—for dead eyes can see—

How she wears on her bosom *a brown rosary*,

O my father beloved ! ”

Then out laughed the bridegroom,
and out laughed withal
Both maidens and youths, by the
old chapel-wall—

“ So she weareth no love-gift, kind
brother,” quoth he,
“ She may wear, an she listeth, a
brown rosary,
Like a pure-hearted lady ”

Then swept through the chapel the
long bridal train

Though he spake to the bride she
replied not again

On, as one in a dream, pale and state-
ly she went

Where the altar-lights burn o’er the
great sacrament,
Faint with daylight, but steady

But her brother had passed in between
them and her

And calmly knelt down on the high-
altar stair—

Of an infantine aspect so stern to the
view

That the priest could not smile on the
child’s eyes of blue,
As he would for another

He knelt like a child marble-sculp-
tured and white

That seems kneeling to pray on the
tomb of a knight,

With a look taken up to each iris of
stone

From the greatness and death where
he kneeleth, but none
From the face of a mother

“ In your chapel, O priest, ye have
wedded and shriven

Fair wives for the hearth, and fair
sinners for Heaven !

But this fairest my sister, ye think
now to wed,

Bid her kneel where she standeth, and
shrive her instead—

O shrive her and wed not ! ”

In tears, the bride’s mother,—“ Sir
priest, unto thee

Would he lie, as he lied to this fair
company ! ”

In wrath, the bride’s lover,—“ The lie
shall be clear !

Speak it out, boy ! the saints in their
niches shall hear—

Be the charge proved or said
not ! ”

Then serene in his childhood he lifted
his face,

And his voice sounded holy and fit
for the place—

“ Look down from your niches, ye
still saints, and see

How she wears on her bosom *a
brown rosary* !

Is it used for the praying ? ”

The youths looked aside—to laugh
there was a sin—

And the maidens’ lips trembled from
smiles shut within

Quoth the priest, “ Thou art wild,
pretty boy ! Blessed she

Who prefers at her bridal a brown
rosary

To a worldly arraying ! ”

The bridegroom spake low and led
onward the bride,

And before the high altar they stood
side by side

The rite-book is opened, the rite is
begun,

They have knelt down together to
rise up as one—

Who laughed by the altar ?

The maidens looked forward, the
youths looked around,—

The bridegroom’s eye flashed from
his prayer at the sound,

And each saw the bride, as if no
bride she were,

Gazing cold at the priest without
gesture of prayer,

As he read from the psalter

The priest never knew that she did
so, but still

He felt a power on him too strong
for his will,

And whenever the Great Name was
there to be read,

His voice sank to silence—THAT
could not be said,

Or the air could not hold it

"I have sinned," quoth he, "I have sinned, I wot"—
 And the tears ran adown his old cheeks at the thought,
 They dropped fast on the book, but he read on the same,—
 And aye was the silence where should be the NAME,—
 As the choristers told it
 The rite-book is closed, and the rite being done
 They who knelt down together, arise up as one
 Fair riseth the bride—Oh, a fair bride is she—
 But, for all (think the maidens) that b own rosary,
 No saint at her praying!
 What aileth the bridegroom? He glares blank and wide—
 Then suddenly turning, he kisseth the bride—
 His lip stung her with cold she glanced upwardly mute
 "Mine own wife," he said, and fell stark at her foot
 In the word he was saying
 They have lifted him up,—but his head sinks away,
 And his face showeth bleak in the sunshine and grey
 Leave him now where he lieth—for oh, never more
 Will he kneel at an altar or stand on a floor!
 Let his bride gaze upon him!
 Long and still was her gaze, while they chafed him there,
 And breathed in the mouth whose last life had kissed her
 But when they stood up—only *they*! with a start
 The shriek from her soul struck her pale lips apart—
 She has lived, and foregone him!
 And low on his body she droppeth adown—
 "Didst call me thine own wife, beloved—thine own?
 Then take thine own with thee! thy coldness is warm
 To the world's cold without thee!
 Come, keep me from harm
 In a calm of thy teaching!"

She looked in his face earnest long, as in sooth
 There were hope of an answer,—and then kissed his mouth,
 And with head on his bosom, wept, wept bitterly—
 "Now, O God, take pity—take pity on me!"
 God, hear my beseeching!"
 She was 'ware of a shadow that crossed where she lay,
 She was 'ware of a presence that withered the day—
 Wild she sprang to her feet,—"*I surrender to thee*
 The broken vow's pledge,—the accursed rosary,—
 I am ready for dying!"
 She dashed it in scorn to the marble-paved ground,
 Where it fell mute as snow, and a weird music-sound
 Crept up, like a chill, up the aisles long and dim,—
 As the fiends tried to mock at the choristers' hymn,
 And moaned at the trying

FOURTH PART

Onora looketh listlessly adown the garden walk
 "I am weary O my mother, of thy tender talk!
 I am weary of the trees a-waving to and fro—
 Of the steadfast skies above, the running brooks below,—
 All things are the same but I,—only I am dreary,
 And, mother, of my dreaminess behold me very weary
 "Mother, brother, pull the flowers I planted in the spring
 And smiled to think I should smile more upon their gathering
 The bees will find out other flowers—oh, pull them, dearest mine,
 And carry them and carry me before St Agnes' shrine"
 —Whereat they pulled the summer flowers she planted in the spring,
 And her and them all mournfully to Agnes' shrine did bring

She looked up to the pictured saint
and gently shook her head—
“The picture is too calm for *me*—
too calm for *me*,” she said
“The little flowers we brought with
us, before it we may lay,
For those are used to look at Heaven,
—but *I* must turn away,—
Because no sinner under sun can dare
or bear to gaze
On God’s or angel’s holiness, except
in Jesu’s face ”

She spoke with passion after pause—
“And were it wisely done,
If we who cannot gaze above, should
walk the earth alone ?
If we whose virtue is so weak, should
have a will so strong,
And stand blind on the rocks, to
choose the right path from the
wrong ?
To choose perhaps a love-lit hearth,
instead of love and Heaven —
A single rose, for a rose-tree, which
beareth seven times seven ?

A rose that droppeth from the hand,
that fadeth in the breast,—
Until, in grieving for the worst, we
learn what is the best ! ”
Then breaking into tears,—“ Dear
God,” she cried, “and must we
see

All blissful things depart from *us*, or
ere we go to *THEE* ?

We cannot guess Thee in the wood,
or hear Thee in the wind ?

Our cedars must fall round us, ere we
see the light behind ?

Ay sooth, we feel too strong in weal
to need Thee on that road,

But woe being come, the soul is
dumb that crieth not on ‘God ’”

Her mother could not speak for tears,
she ever mused thus—

“*The bees will find out other flowers,—*
but what is left for *us* ? ”

But her young brother stayed his
sobs and knelt beside her knee

—“Thou sweetest sister in the world,
hast never a word for *me* ? ”

She passed her hand across his face,
she pressed it on his cheek,

So tenderly, so tenderly—she needed
not to speak

The wreath which lay on shrine that
day, at vespers bloomed no
more—

The woman fair who placed it there,
had died an hour before

Both perished mute, for lack of root,
earth’s nourishment to reach,—

O reader, breathe (the ballad saith)
some sweetness out of each !

THE MOURNING MOTHER

(OF THE DEAD BLIND)

I

Dost thou weep, mourning mother,

For thy blind boy in grave ?

That no more with each other,

Sweet counsel ye can have ?—

That *he*, left dark by nature,

Can never more be led

By thee, maternal creature,

Along smooth paths instead ?

That thou canst no more show him

The sunshine, by the heat,

The river’s silver flowing,

By murmurs at his feet ?

The foliage, by its coolness,

The roses, by their smell,

And all creation’s fulness,

By Love’s invisible ?

Weepst thou to behold not

His meek blind eyes again —

Closed doorways which were folded,

And prayed against in vain—

And under which, sate smiling

The child-mouth evermore,

As one who watcheth, wiling

The time by, at a door ?

And weepst thou to feel not

His clinging hand on thine—

Which now, at dream-time, will not

Its cold touch disentwine ?

And weepst thou still oft,

Oh, never more to mark

His low soft words, made softer

By speaking in the dark ?

Weep on, thou mourning mother !

II

But since to him when living,

Thou wert both sun and moon,

Look o’er his grave, surviving,

From a high sphere alone !

Sustain that exaltation—

Expand that tender light.

And hold in mother-passion,
 Thy Blessed, in thy sight
 See how he went out straightway
 From the dark world he knew,—
 No twilight in the gateway
 To mediate 'twixt the two,—
 Into the sudden glory,
 Out of the dark he trod,
 Departing from before thee
 At once to light and God !—
 For the first face, beholding
 The Christ's in its divine,—
 For the first place, the golden
 And tideless hyaline ,
 With trees, at lasting summer,
 That rock to songful sound,
 While angels the new-corn,
 Wrap a still smile around
 Oh, in the blessed psalm now,
 His happy voice he tries,—
 Spreading a thicker palm-bough,
 Than others, o'er his eyes,—
 Yet still, in all the singing,
 Thinks haply of thy song
 Which, in his life's first springing,
 Sang to him all night long,
 And wishes it beside him,
 With kissing lips that cool
 And soft did overglide him,—
 To make the sweetness full
 Look up, O mourning mother ,
 Thy blind boy walks in light !
 Ye wait for one another,
 Before God's infinite !
 But *thou* art now the darkest,
 Thou mother left below—
Thou, the soul blind,—thou markest,
 Content that it be so,—
 Until ye two give meeting
 Where Heaven's pearl-gate is,
 And *he* shall lead thy feet in,
 As once thou leddest *his* !
 Wait on, thou mourning mother

A VALEDICTION

I

God be with thee, my beloved,—God
 be with thee !
 Else alone thou goest forth,
 Thy face unto the north,—
 Moor and pleasance all around thee
 and beneath thee,
 Looking equal in one snow ,
 While I who try to reach thee,
 Vainly follow, vainly follow,
 With the farewell and the hullo,

And cannot reach thee so
 Alas ! I can but teach thee !
 God be with thee, my beloved,—God
 be with thee !

II

Can I teach thee, my beloved,—can
 I teach thee ?
 If I said, " Go left or right,"
 The counsel would be light,—
 The wisdom, poor of all that could
 enrich thee
 My right would show like left ,
 My raising would depress thee,—
 My choice of light would blind
 thee,—
 Of way, would leave behind thee—
 Of end, would leave bereft
 Alas ! I can but bless thee !
 May God teach thee, my beloved,—
 may God teach thee !

III

Can I bless thee, my beloved,—can I
 bless thee ?
 What blessing word can I,
 From mine own tears keep dry ?
 What flowers grow in my field where-
 with to dress thee ?
 My good reverts to ill ,
 My calmnesses would move
 thee,—
 My softnesses would prick
 thee,—
 My bindings up would break
 thee,—
 My crownings, curse and kill
 Alas ! I can but love thee !
 May God bless thee, my beloved,—
 may God bless thee !

IV

Can I love thee, my beloved,—can I
 love thee ?
 And is *this* like love, to stand
 With no help in my hand,
 When strong as death I fain would
 watch above thee ?
 My love-kiss can deny
 No tear that falls beneath it
 Mine oath of love can swear thee
 From no ill that comes near
 thee,—
 And thou diest while I breathe it,
 And *I*—I can but die !
 May God love thee, my beloved,—
 may God love thee !

LADY GERALDINE'S COURTSHIP

A ROMANCE OF THE AGE

A poet writes to his friend PLACE—*A room in Wycombe Hall* TIME—*Late in the evening*

DEAR my friend and fellow-student, I would lean my spirit o'er you !
Down the purple of this chamber, tears should scarcely run at will
I am humbled who was humble ! Friend,—I bow my head before you !
You should lead me to my peasants,—but their faces are too still

There's a lady—an earl's daughter, she is proud and she is noble,
And she treads the crimson carpet, and she breathes the perfumed air,
And a kingly blood sends glances up her princely eye to trouble,
And the shadow of a monarch's crown is softened in her hair

She has halls among the woodlands, and has castles by the breakers,
She has farms and she has manors, she can threaten and command,
And the palpitating engines snort in steam across her acres,
As they mark upon the blasted heaven the measure of the land

There are none of England's daughters who can show a prouder presence ;
Upon princely suitors praying, she has looked in her disdain
She was sprung of English nobles, I was born of English peasants,
What was *I* that I should love her—save for competence to pain ?

I was only a poor poet, made for singing at her casement,
As the finches or the thrushes, while she thought of other things
Oh, she walked so high above me, she appeared to my abasement,
In her lovely silken murmur like an angel clad in wings !

Many vassals bow before her as her carriage sweeps their doorways,
She has blest their little children,—as a priest or queen were she !
Far too tender, or too cruel far, her smile upon the poor was,
For I thought it was the same smile which she used to smile on *me*

She has voters in the Commons, she has lovers in the palace—
And of all the fair court-ladies few have jewels half as fine
Oft the prince has named her beauty 'twixt the red wine and the chalice :
Oh, and what was *I* to love her ? my beloved, my Geraldine !

Yet I could not choose but love her—I was born to poet-uses—
To love all things set above me all of good and all of fair
Nymphs of mountain, not of valley, we are wont to call the Muses—
And in nympholeptic climbing, poets pass from mount to star

And because I was a poet, and because the public praised me,
With their critical deduction for the modern writer's fault,
I could sit at rich men's tables,—though the courtesies that raised me,
Still suggested clear between us the pale spectrum of the salt

And they praised me in her presence,—“ Will your book appear this summer ? ”

Then returning to each other—“ Yes, our plans are for the moors, ”
Then with whisper dropped behind me—“ There he is ! the latest comer !
Oh, she only likes his verses ! what is over, she endures

“ Quite low-born ! self-educated ! somewhat gifted though by nature,—
And we make a point of asking him,—of being very kind
You may speak he does not hear you, and besides, he writes no satire,—
All these serpents kept by charmers, leave the natural sting behind ”

I grew scornfuller, grew colder, as I stood up there among them,
Till as frost intense will burn you, the cold scorning scorched my brow,
When a sudden silver speaking, gravely cadenced, overruling them,
And a sudden silken stirring touched my inner nature through

I looked upward and beheld her ! With a calm and regnant spirit,
Slowly round she swept her eyelids, and said clear before them all—
" Have you such superfluous honour, sir, that, able to confer it
You will come down, Mr Bertram, as my guest to Wycombe Hall ? "

Here she paused,—she had been paler at the first word of her speaking,
But because a silence followed it, blushed somewhat, as for shame,
Then, as scorning her own feeling, resumed calmly—" I am seeking
More distinction than these gentlemen think worthy of my claim

" Ne'ertheless, you see, I seek it—not because I am a woman,"—
(Here her smile sprang like a fountain, and, so, overflowed her mouth)
" But because my woods in Sussex have some purple shades at gloaming,
Which are worthy of a king in state, or poet in his youth

" I invite you, Mr Bertram, to no scene for worldly speeches—
Sir, I scarce should dare—but only where God asked the thrushes first—
And if *you* will sing beside them, in the covert of my beeches,
I will thank you for the woodlands, for the human world, at worst "

Then, she smiled around right childly, then, she gazed around right queenly,
And I bowed—I could not answer ! Alternated light and gloom—
While as one who quells the lions, with a steady eye serenely,
She, with level fronting eyelids, passed out stately from the room

Oh, the blessed woods of Sussex, I can hear them still around me,
With their leafy tide of greenery still rippling up the wind !
Oh, the cursed woods of Sussex ! where the hunter's arrow found me,
When a fair face and a tender voice had made me mad and blind !

In that ancient hall of Wycombe, thronged the numerous guests invited,
And the lovely London ladies trod the floors with gliding feet,
And their voices low with fashion, not with feeling, softly freighted
All the air about the windows, with elastic laughter sweet

For at eve, the open windows flung their light out on the terrace
Which the floating orbs of curtains did with gradual shadow sweep,
While the swans upon the river, fed at morning by the heiress,
Trembled downward through their snowy wings at music in their sleep

And there evermore was music both of instrument and singing,
Till the finches of the shrubberies grew restless in the dark,
But the cedars stood up motionless, each in a moonlight ringing,
And the deer, half in the glummer, strewed the hollows of the park

And though sometimes she would bind me with her silver-corded speeches
To commix my words and laughter with the converse and the jest,
Oft I sate apart, and gazing on the river through the beeches,
Heard as pure the swans swam down it, her pure voice o'erfloat the rest

In the morning, horn of huntsman, hoof of steed, and laugh of rider,
Spread out cheery from the court-yard till we lost them in the hills,
While herself and other ladies and her suitors left beside her,
Went a-wandering up the gardens through the laurels and abeles

Thus, her foot upon the new-mown grass—bareheaded—with the flowing
Of the virginal white vesture gathered closely to her throat.

With the golden ringlets in her neck just quickened by her going,
And appearing to breathe sun for air and doubting if to float,—

With a branch of dewy maple, which her right hand held above her,
And which trembled a green shadow in betwixt her and the skies,—
As she turned her face in going, thus, she drew me on to love her,
And to worship the divineness of the smile hid in her eyes

For her eyes alone smile constantly her lips have serious sweetness,
And her front is calm—the dimple rarely ripples on her cheek,
But her deep blue eyes smile constantly, as if they in discreetness
Kept the secret of a happy dream she does not care to speak

Thus she drew me the first morning, out across into the garden,
And I walked among her noble friends and could not keep behind,
Spake she unto all and unto me—"Behold, I am the warden
Of the song-birds in these lindens which are cages to their mind

"But within this swarded circle into which the lime-walk brings us,
Whence the beeches, rounded greenly, stand away in reverent fear,
I will let no music enter, saving what the fountain sings us
Which the lilies round the basin may seem pure enough to hear

"The live air that waves the lilies waves the slender jet of water
Like a holy thought sent feebly up from soul of fasting saint!
Whereby lies a marble Silence, sleeping! (Lough the sculptor wrought her)
So asleep, she is forgetting to say '*Hush*!'—a fancy quaint

"Mark how heavy white her eyelids! not a dream between them lingers
And the left hand's index droppeth from the lips upon the cheek
And the right hand—with the symbol rose held slack within the fingers,—
Has fallen backward in the basin—yet this Silence will not speak!

"That the essential meaning growing may exceed the special symbol,
Is the thought as I conceive it it applies more high and low,—
Our true noblemen will often through right nobleness grow humble,
And assert an inward honour by denying outward show"

"Nay, your Silence," said I, "truly, holds her symbol rose but slackly,
Yet *she* holds it—or would scarcely be a Silence to our ken!
And your nobles wear their ermine on the outside, or walk blackly
In the presence of the social law as most ignoble men

"Let the poets dream such dreaming! Madam, in these British islands,
'Tis the substance that wanes ever, 'tis the symbol that exceeds
Soon we shall have nought but symbol! and, for statues like this Silence,
Shall accept the rose's image—in another case, the weed's"

"Not so quickly!" she retorted,—"*I* confess, where'er you go you
Find for things, names—shows for actions, and pure gold for honour clear,
But when all is run to symbol in the Social, I will throw you
The world's book which now reads drily, and sit down with Silence here"

Half in playfulness she spoke, I thought, and half in indignation,
Friends who listened, laughed her words off, while her lovers deemed her fair
A fair woman flushed with feeling, in her noble-lighted station
Near the statue's white reposing—and both bathed in sunny air!—

With the trees round not so distant but you heard their vernal murmur
And beheld in light and shadow the leaves in and outward move,
And the little fountain leaping toward the sun-heart to be warmer,
Then recoiling in a tremble from the too much light above—

'Tis a picture for remembrance ! and thus, morning after morning,
 Did I follow as she drew me by the spirit to her feet—
 Why her greyhound followed also ! dogs—we both were dogs for scorning—
 To be sent back when she pleased it and her path lay through the wheat

And thus, morning after morning, spite of vows and spite of sorrow,
 Did I follow at her drawing, while the week-days passed along,
 Just to feed the swans this noontide, or to see the fawns to-morrow,
 Or to teach the hill-side echo some sweet Tuscan in a song

Av, for sometimes on the hill-side, while we sate down in the gowans,
 With the forest green behind us, and its shadow cast before,
 And the river running under, and across it from the rowans
 A brown partridge whirring near us till we felt the air it bore,—

There, obedient to her praying, did I read aloud the poems
 Made by Tuscan flutes or instruments more various of our own,
 Read the pastoral parts of Spenser—or the subtle interflowings
 Found in Petrarch's sonnets—here's the book—the leaf is folded down !—

Or at times a modern volume,—Wordsworth's solemn-thoughted idyl,
 Howitt's ballad-verse, or Tennyson's enchanted reverie,—
 Or from Browning some "Pomegranate," which, 'hf cut deep down the middle,
 Shows a heart within blood-tinctured, of a veined humanity !—

Or at times I read there, hoarsely, some new poem of my making—
 Poets ever fail in reading their own verses to their worth,—
 For the echo in you breaks upon the words which you are speaking,
 And the chariot-wheels jar in the gate through which you drive them forth.

After, when we were grown tired of books the silence round us flinging
 A slow arm of sweet compression, felt with beatings at the breast,—
 She would break out, on a sudden, in a gush of woodland singing
 Like a child's emotion in a god—a naiad tired of rest

Oh, to see or hear her singing ! scarce I know which is divinest—
 For her looks sing too—she modulates her gestures on the tune,
 And her mouth stirs with the song, like song, and when the notes are finest,
 'Tis the eyes that shoot out vocal light and seem to swell them on

Then we talked—oh, how we talked ! her voice, so cadenced in the talking,
 Made another singing—of the soul ! a music without bars—
 While the leafy sounds of woodlands, humming round where we were walking,
 Brought interposition worthy-sweet,—as skies about the stars

And she spake such good thoughts natural, as if she always thought them—
 She had sympathies so rapid, open, free as bird on branch,
 Just as ready to fly east as west, whichever way besought them
 In the birchen-wood a chirrup, or a cock-crow in the grange

In her utmost lightness there is truth—and often she speaks lightly—
 Has a grace in being gay, which even mournful souls approve,
 For the root of some grave earnest thought is understruck so rightly
 As to justify the foliage and the waving flowers above

And she talked on—we talked, rather ! upon all things—substance—shadow—
 Of the sheep that browsed the grasses—of the reapers in the corn—
 Of the little children from the schools, seen winding through the meadow—
 Of the poor rich world beyond them, still kept poorer by its scorn

So, of men, and so, of letters—books are men of higher stature,
 And the only men that speak aloud for future times to hear—

So of mankind in the abstract, which grows slowly into nature,
Yet will lift the cry of "progress," as it trod from sphere to sphere

And her custom was to praise me when I said,—“The Age culls simples,
With a broad clown's back turned broadly to the glory of the stars
We are gods by our own reck'ning,—and may well shut up the temples,
And wield on, amid the incense-steam, the thunder of our cars

“For we throw out acclamations of self-thanking, self-admiring
With, at every mile run faster,—‘O the wondrous, wondrous age,’
Little thinking if we work our souls as nobly as our iron,—
Or if angels will commend us at the goal of pilgrimage

“Why, what is this patient entrance into nature's deep resources,
But the child's most gradual learning to walk upright without bane?—
When we drive out, from the cloud of steam, majestic white horses,
Are we greater than the first men who led black ones by the mane?”

“If we trod the deeps of ocean, if we struck the stars in rising,
If we wrapped the globe intensely with one hot electric breath,
‘Twere but power within our *tether*—no new spirit-power comprising—
And in life we were not greater men nor bolder men in death”

She was patient with my talking, and I loved her—loved her, certes,
As I loved all heavenly objects, with uplifted eyes and hands!
As I loved pure inspirations—loved the graces, loved the virtues,—
In a Love content with writing his own name, on desert sands

Or at least I thought so, purely!—thought, no idiot Hope was raising
Any crown to crown Love's silence—silent Love that sate alone—
Out, alas! the stag is like me—he, that tries to go on grazing
With the great deep gun-wound in his neck, then reels with sudden moan

It was thus I reeled! I told you that her hand had many suitors—
But she smiles them down imperially, as Venus did the waves,
And with such a gracious coldness that they cannot press their futures
On the present of her courtesy which yieldingly enslaves

And this morning as I sate alone within the inner chamber
With the great saloon beyond it, lost in pleasant thought serene—
For I had been reading Camoens—that poem you remember,
Which his lady's eyes are praised in, as the sweetest ever seen

And the book lay open, and my thought flew from it, taking from it
A vibration and impulsion to an end beyond its own,—
As the branch of a green osier, when a child would overcome it,
Springs up freely from his claspings, and goes swinging in the sun

As I mused I heard a murmur,—it grew deep as it grew longer—
Speakers using earnest language—“Lady Geraldine, you *would*!”
And I heard a voice that pleaded ever on, in accents stronger
As a sense of reason gave it power to make its rhetoric good

Well I knew that voice—it was an earl's, of soul that matched his station—
Of a soul complete in lordship—might and right read on his brow,
Very finely courteous—far too proud to doubt his domination
Of the common people,—he atones for grandeur by a bow

High straight forehead, nose of eagle cold blue eyes, of less expression
Than resistance,—coldly casting off the looks of other men,
As steel, arrows,—inelastic lips which seem to taste possession,
And be cautious lest the common air should injure or distract

For the rest, accomplished, upright,—ay, and standing by his order
 With a bearing not ungraceful, fond of art and letters too,
 Just a good man made a proud man,—as the sandy rocks that border
 A wild coast, by circumstances, in a regnant ebb and flow

Thus, I knew that voice—I heard it—and I could not help the hearkening
 In the room I stood up blindly and my burning heart within
 Seemed to seethe and fuse my senses, till they ran on all sides darkening,
 And scorched, weighed, like melted metal, round my feet that stood therein

And that voice, I heard it pleading, for love's sake—for wealth, position
 For the sake of liberal uses, and great actions to be done—
 And she interrupted gently—"Nay, my lord, the old tradition
 Of your Normans, by some worthier hand than mine is, should be won"

"Ah, that whiter hand!" he said quickly,—and in his either drew it
 Or attempted—for with gravity and instance she replied—
 "Nay, indeed, my lord, this talk is vain, and we had best eschew it,
 And pass on, like friends to other points less easy to decide"

What he said again, I know not. It is likely that his trouble
 Worked his pride up to the surface, for she answered in slow scorn—
 "And your lordship judges rightly. Whom I marry, shall be noble,
 Ay, and wealthy. I shall never blush to think how he was born"

There, I maddened! her words stung me! Life swept through me into fever,
 And my soul sprang up astonished, sprang, full-statured in an hour
 Know you what it is when anguish, with apocalyptic NEVER,
 To a Pythian height dilates you,—and despair sublimates to power?

From my brain, the soul-wings budded,—waved a flame about my body,
 Whence conventions coiled to ashes. I felt self-drawn out, as man
 From amalgamate false natures, and I saw the skies grow ruddy—
 With the deepening feet of angels, and I knew what spirits can

I was mad—inspired—say either! anguish worketh inspiration!
 Was a man or beast—perhaps so, for the tiger roars when speared!
 And I walked on, step by step, along the level of my passion—
 Oh my soul! and passed the doorway to her face, and never feared

He had left her—peradventure, when my footstep proved my coming—
 But for *her*—she half arose, then sate—grew scarlet and grew pale
 Oh, she trembled!—'tis so always with a worldly man or woman
 In the presence of true spirits—what else *can* they do but quail?

Oh, she fluttered like a tame bird, in among its forest-brothers
 Far too strong for it! then drooping, bowed her face upon her hands—
 And I spake out wildly, fiercely, brutal truths of her and others!
 I, she planted in the desert, swathed her, windlike, with my sands

I plucked up her social fictions, bloody-rooted though leaf-verdant,—
 Trod them down with words of shaming—all the purple and the gold
 And the "landed stakes" and lordships—all, that spirits pure and ardent
 Are cast out of love and honour, because chancing not to hold

"For myself I do not argue" said I, "though I love you, Madam,
 But for better souls that nearer to the height of yours have trod—
 And this age shows, to my thinking, still more infidels to Adam,
 Than directly, by profession, simple infidels to God

"Yet, O God" (I said), "O grave" (I said), "O mother's heart and bosom,
 With whom first and last are equal, saint and corpse and little child!

We are fools to your deductions in these figments of heart-closing !
We are traitors to your causes, in these sympathies defiled !

' Learn more reverence, Madam, not for rank or wealth—*that* needs no learning !

That comes quickly—quick as sin does ! ay, and often works to sin ,
But for Adam's seed, MAN ! Trust me, 'tis a clay above your scorning,
With God's image stamped upon it, and God's kindling breath within

" What right have you, Madam, gazing in your palace mirror daily,
Getting so, by heart, your beauty, which all others must adore,
While you draw the golden ringlets down your fingers to vow gaily
You will wed no man that's only good to God,—and nothing more ?

" Why, what right have you, made fair by that same God—the sweetest woman

Of all women He has fashioned—with your lovely spirit-face,
Which would seem too near to vanish if its smile were not so human,—
And your voice of holy sweetness, turning common words to grace ,

" What right *can* you have, God's other works to scorn, despise, revile them

In the gross, as mere men, broadly—not as *noble* men forsooth,—
As mere pariahs of the outer world, forbidden to assail them
In the hope of living,—dying,—near that sweetness of your mouth ?

" Have you any answer, Madam ? If my spirit were less earthy—
If its instrument were gifted with a better silver string—
I would kneel down where I stand, and say—' Behold me ! I am worthy
Of thy loving, for I love thee ! I am worthy as a king '

" As it is—your ermined pride, I swear, shall feel this stain upon her,
That I, poor, weak, tost with passion, scorned by me and you again,
Love you, Madam—dare to love you—to my grief and your dishonour—
To my endless desolation, and your impotent disdain ! "

More mad words like these—mere madness ! friend, I need not write them fuller,

For I hear my hot soul dropping on the lines in showers of tears—
Oh, a woman ! friend, a woman ! Why, a beast had scarce been duller
Than roar bestial loud complaints against the shining of the spheres

But at last there came a pause I stood all vibrating with thunder
Which my soul had used The silence drew her face up like a call
Could you guess what word she uttered ? She looked up, as if in wonder,
With tears beaded on her lashes, and said " Bertram ! " it was all

If she had cursed me—and she might have—or if even, with queenly bearing
Which at need is used by women, she had risen up and said,

" Sir, you are my guest, and therefore I have given you a full hearing—
Now, beseech you, choose a name exacting somewhat less, instead—"

I had borne it !—but that " Bertram "—why it lies there on the paper
A mere word, without her accent,—and you cannot judge the weight
Of the calm which crushed my passion ! I seemed swimming in a vapour,—
And her gentleness destroyed me whom her scorn made desolate

So, struck backward and exhausted with that inward flow of passion
Which had rushed on, sparing nothing, into forms of abstract truth,—
With a logic agonising through unseemly demonstration—
And with youth's own anguish turning grimly grey the hairs of youth,—

With the sense accursed and instant, that if even I spake wisely
 I spake basely—using truth,—if what I spake, indeed, was true—
 To avenge wrong on a woman—*her*, who sate there weighing nicely
 A poor manhood's worth, found guilty of such deeds as I could do !—

With such wrong and woe exhausted—what I suffered and occasioned,—
 As a wild horse through a city runs with lightning in his eyes,
 And then dashing at a church's cold and passive wall, impassioned,
 Strikes the death into his burning brain, and blindly drops and dies—

So I fell, struck down before her ! Do you blame me, friend, for weakness ?
 'Twas my strength of passion slew me !—fell before her like a stone !
 Fast the dreadful world rolled from me, on its roaring wheels of blackness—
 When the light came I was lying in this chamber, and alone

Oh, of course, she charged her lacqueys to bear out the sickly burden,
 And to cast it from her scornful sight—but not *beyond* the gate—
 She is too kind to be cruel, and too haughty not to pardon
 Such a man as I—'twere something to be level to her hate

But for *me*—you now are conscious why, my friend, I write this letter,—
 How my life is read all backward, and the charm of life undone !
 I shall leave her house at dawn—I would to-night, if I were better—
 And I charge my soul to hold my body strengthened for the sun

When the sun has dyed the oriel, I depart with no last gazes,
 No weak moanings—one word only, left in writing for her hands,—
 Out of reach of her derision and some unavailing praises,
 To make front against this anguish in the far and foreign lands

Blame me not, I would not squander life in grief—I am abstemious
 I but nurse my spirit's falcon, that its wing may soar again
 There's no room for tears of weakness in the blind eyes of a Pheemus
 Into work the poet kneads them,—and he does not die *till then*

CONCLUSION

Bertram finished the last pages, while along the silence ever
 Still in hot and heavy splashes, fell his tears on every leaf
 Having ended he leans backward in his chair, with lips that quiver
 From the deep unspoken, ay, and deep unwritten thoughts of grief

Soh ! how still the lady standeth ! 'tis a dream—a dream of mercies !
 'Twixt the purple lattice-curtains, how she standeth still and pale !
 'Tis a vision, sure, of mercies, sent to soften his self-curses—
 Sent to sweep a patient quiet o'er the tossing of his wail

" Eyes," he said, " now throbbing through me ! are ye eyes that did undo
 me ?

Shunning eyes, like antique jewels set in Parian statue-stone !
 Underneath that calm white forehead, are ye ever burning torrid,
 O'er the desolate sand-desert of my heart and life undone ? "

With a murmurous stir uncertain, in the air, the purple curtain
 Swellets in and swellets out around her motionless pale brows,
 While the gliding of the river sends a rippling noise for ever
 Through the open casement whitened by the moonlight's slant repose.

Said he—" Vision of a lady ! stand there silent, stand there steady !
 Now I see it plainly, plainly, now I cannot hope or doubt—
 There, the brows of mild repression—there, the lips of silent passion,
 Curved like an archer's bow to send the bitter arrows out "

Ever, evermore the while in a slow silence she kept smiling,—
And approached him slowly, slowly, in a gliding measured pace,
With her two white hands extended, as if praying one offended,
And a look of supplication, gazing earnest in his face

Said he—"Wake me by no gesture,—sound of breath, or stir of vesture,
Let the blessed apparition melt not yet to its divine!
No approaching—hush! no breathing! or my heart must swoon to death in
The too utter life thou bringest—O thou dream of Geraldine!"

Ever, evermore the while in a slow silence she kept smiling—
But the tears ran over lightly from her eyes and tenderly,
"Dost thou, Bertram, truly love me? Is no woman far above me
Found more worthy of thy poet-heart than such a one as I?"

Said he—"I would dream so ever, like the flowing of that river,
Flowing ever in a shadow greenly onward to the sea!
So, thou vision of all sweetness—princely to a full completeness,—
Would my heart and life flow onward—deathward—through this dream of
THEE!"

Ever, evermore the while in a slow silence she kept smiling,—
While the silver tears ran faster down the blushing of her cheeks,
Then with both her hands enfolding both of his, she softly told him,
"Bertram, if I say I love thee, 'tis the vision only speaks"
Softened, quickened to adore her, on his knee he fell before her—
And she whispered low in triumph—"It shall be as I have sworn!
Very rich he is in virtues,—very noble,—noble, certes,
And I shall not blush in knowing that men call him lowly born"

A LAMENT FOR ADONIS

FROM BION

I

I MOURN for Adonis—Adonis is dead!
Fair Adonis is dead, and the Loves
are lamenting
Sleep, Cypris, no more, on thy purple-
strewn bed,
Arise, wretch stoled in black,—beat
thy breast unrelenting,
And shriek to the worlds, "Fair
Adonis is dead!"

II

I mourn for Adonis—the Loves are
lamenting
He lies on the hills in his beauty
and death,—
The white tusk of a boar has trans-
pierced his white thigh!
Cytherea grows mad at his thin
gasping breath,
While the black blood drips down on
the pale ivory
And his eyeballs lie quenched with
the weight of his brows

The rose fades from his lips, and upon
them just parted
The kiss dies the goddess consents
not to lose,
Though the kiss of the Dead cannot
make her glad-hearted—
He knows not who kisses him dead
in the dews

III

I mourn for Adonis—the Loves are
lamenting
Deep, deep in the thigh, is Adonis's
wound,
But a deeper, is Cypris's bosom pre-
senting—
The youth lieth dead while his dogs
howl around,
And the nymphs weep aloud from the
mists of the hill,—
And the poor Aphrodite, with
tresses unbound,
All dishevelled, unsandalled, shrieks
mournful and shrill
Through the dusk of the groves
The thorns, tearing her feet,
Gather up the red flower of her blood
which is holy,

Each footstep she takes,—and the
valleys repeat
The sharp cry which she utters, and
draw it out slowly
She calls on her spouse, her Assy-
rian,—on him
Her own youth—while the dark
blood spreads over his body—
The chest taking hue from the gash
in the limb,
And the bosom once ivory, turning
to ruddy

IV

Ah, ah, Cythrea! the Loves are
lamenting
She lost her fair spouse, and so lost
her fair smile—
When he lived she was fair by the
whole world's consenting,
Whose fairness is dead with him!
woe worth the while!
All the mountains above and the oak-
lands below
Murmur, ah, ah, Adonis! the streams
overflow
Aphrodite's deep wail,—river-foun-
tains in pity
Weep soft in the hills, and the flowers,
as they blow,
Redden outward with sorrow, while
all hear her go
With the song of her sadness
through mountain and city

V

Ah, ah, Cytherea! Adonis is dead
Fair Adonis is dead—Echo answers,
Adonis!
Who weeps not for Cypris, when bow-
ing her head
She stares at the wound where it
gapes and astones?
—When, ah, ah!—she saw how the
blood ran away
And empurpled the thigh, and
with wild hands flung out,
Said with sobs, "Stay, Adonis! un-
happy one, stay,—
Let me feel thee once more—let me
ring thee about
With the clasp of my arms, and press
kiss into kiss!
Wait a little, Adonis, and kiss me
again,
For the last time beloved,—and but
so much of this

That the kiss may learn life from
the warmth of the strain!
—Till thy breath shall exude from
thy soul to my mouth
To my heart,—and the love-charm
I once more receiving,
May drink thy love in it, and keep, of
a truth
That one kiss in the place of Adonis
the living
Thou fliest me, mournful one, fliest
me far
My Adonis, and seekest the Ache-
ron portal,—
To Hell's cruel King goest down with
a scar,
While I weep and live on like a
wretched immortal,
And follow no step!—O Persephone,
take him,
My husband!—thou'rt better and
brighter than I,
So all beauty flows down to thee! I
cannot make him
Look up at my grief,—there's des-
pair in my cry,
Since I wail for Adonis, who died to
me died to me
—Then I fear *thee*!—Art thou dead,
my Adored?

Passion ends like a dream in the sleep
that's denied to me—
Cypris is widowed,—the Loves seek
their lord
All the house through in vain! Charm
of cestus has ceased
With thy clasp!—O too bold in the
hunt past preventing,
Ay, ma, thou so fair to have
strife with a beast!"—
Thus the goddess wails on—and
the Loves are lamenting

VI

Ah, ah, Cytherea! Adonis is dead,—
She wept tear after tear, with the
blood which was shed,—
And both turned into flowers for the
earth's garden-close,
Her tears, to the wind flower,—his
blood, to the rose

VII

I mourn for Adonis—Adonis is dead
Weep no more in the woods, Cy-
therea, thy lover!

So, well ' make a place for his corse in
thy bed,
With the purples thou sleepest in,
under and over
He's fair though a corse—a fair corse
like a sleeper—
Lay soft in the silks he had pleasure
to fold
When, beside thee at night, holy
dreams deep and deeper
Enclosed his young life on the
couch made of gold !
Love him still, poor Adonis ! cast on
him together
The crowns and the flowers ! since
he died from the place,
Why let all die with him—let the
blossoms go wither,
Rain myrtles and olive-buds down
on his face !
Rain the myrrh down, let all that is
best fall a-pining,
Since the myrrh of his life from
thy keeping is swept !—
—Pale he lay, thine Adonis in purples
reclining —
The Loves raised their voices
around him and wept
They have shorn their bright curls off
to cast on Adonis
One treads on his bow,—on his arrows,
another —
One breaks up a well-feathered quiver,
and one is
Bent low at a sandal, untying the
strings,
And one carries the vases of gold
from the springs,
While one washes the wound,—and
behind them a brother
Fans down on the body sweet airs
with his wings

VIII

Cytherea herself, now, the Loves are
lamenting
Each torch at the door Hymenæus
blew out,
And the marriage-wreath dropping its
leaves as repenting,
No more " Hymen, Hymen," is
chanted about,
But the *ai ai* instead—" *ai alas* " is
begun
For Adonis, and then follows " *ai*
Hymenæus ! "

The Graces are weeping for Cinyris'
son,
Sobbing low, each to each, " His
fair eyes cannot see us ! "—
Their wail strikes more shrill than the
sadder Dione's !
The Fates mourn aloud for Adonis,
Adonis,
Deep chanting ! he hears not a word
that they say
He *would* hear, but Persephonè has
him in keeping
—Cease moan, Cytherea—leave pomps
for to-day,
And weep new when a new year
refits thee for weeping

A VISION OF POETS

" O sacred Essence, lighting me this hour,
How may I lightly stifle thy great power ?
Echo Power ! but of whence ? under the green
wood spraye ?
Or liv'st in Heaven ? saye
Echo In Heavens aye ! tell, may I it obayne
By alms, by fasting, prayer,—by paine ?
Echo By paine
Show me the paine, it shall be undergone
I to mine end will still go on
Echo Go on "

—*Britannia's Pastorals*

A POET could not sleep a night,
For his soul kept up too much light
Under his eyelids for the night
And thus he rose disquieted
With sweet rhymes ringing through
his head,
And in the forest wandered,—
Where, sloping up the darkest glades,
The moon had drawn long colonnades,
Upon whose floor the verdure fades
To a faint silver,—pavement fair
The antique wood-nymphs scarce
would dare
To footprint o'er, had such been there,
And rather sit by breathlessly,
With fear in their large eyes to see
The consecrated sight But HE—
The poet—who with spirit-kiss
Familiar, had long claimed for his
Whatever earthly beauty is,—
Who also in his spirit bore
A Beauty passing the earth's store,
Walked calmly onward evermore

His aimless thoughts in metre went,
Like a babe's hand without intent
Drawn down a seven-stringed instru-
ment

Nor jarred it with his humour, as,
With a faint stirring down the grass,
An apparition fair did pass

He might have feared another time,
But all things fair and strange did
chime

With his thoughts then—as rhyme to
rhyme

“ The boor who ploughs the daisy
down,
The chief whose mortgage of renown,
Fixed upon graves, has bought a
crown—

“ Both these are happier more ap-
proved,

"Come on with me, come on with me,
And learn in coming Let me free
Thy spirit into verity "

She ceased her palfrey's paces sent
No separate noises as she went,—
'Twas a bee's hum—a little spent

And while the poet seemed to tread
Along the drowsy noise so made,
The forest heaved up overhead

Its billowy foliage through the air,
And the calm stars did far and spare,
O'erswim the masses everywhere,—

Save when the overtopping pines
Did bar their tremulous light with
lines

All fixed and black Now the moon
shines

A broader glory You may see
The trees grow rarer presently,—
The air blows up more fresh and free

Until they come from dark to light,
And from the forest to the sight
Of the large Heaven-heart, bare with
night,—

A fiery throb in every star,
Those burning arteries that are
The conduits of God's life afar,—

A wild brown moorland underneath,
And four pools breaking up the heath
With white low gleanings, blank as
death

Beside the first pool, near the wood,
A dead tree in set horror stood,
Peeled and disjointed, stark as rood,
Since thunder-stricken, years ago,
Fixed in the spectral strain and throe
Wherewith it struggled from the blow

A monumental tree, alone,
That will not bend in storms nor groan,
But break off sudden like a stone,—

Its lifeless shadow lies oblique
Upon the pool,—where, javelin-like,
The star-rays quiver while they strike

"Drink," said the lady, very still—
"Be holy and cold" He did her will,
And drank the starry water chill

The next pool they came near unto,
Was bare of trees there, only grew
Straight flags and lilies, just a few,

Which sullen on the water sate,
And leant their faces on the flat,
As weary of the starlight-state

"Drink" said the lady, grave and
slow—

"*World's use* behoveth thee to know"
He drank the bitter wave below

The third pool, girt with thorny
bushes

And flaunting weeds, and reeds and
rushes

That winds sang through in mournful
gushes,

Was whitely smeared in many a round
By a slow slime the starlight sround
Over the ghastly light it found

"Drink," said the lady, sad and
slow—

"*World's love* behoveth thee to know"
He looked to her, commanding so

Her brow was troubled, but her eye
Struck clear to his soul For all reply
He drank the water suddenly,—

Then, with a deathly sickness, passed
Beside the fourth pool and the last,
Where weights of shadow were down-
cast

From yew and alder, and rank trails
Of nightshade clasping the trunk-
scales,

And flung across the intervals

From yew to yew Who darest stoop
Where those dank branches overdroop,
Into his heart the chill strikes up,

He hears a silent gliding coil—
The snakes strain hard against the
soil—

His foot slips in their slimy oil,

And toads seem crawling on his hand,
And clinging bats, but dimly scanned,
Full in his face their wings expand

A paleness took the poet's cheek
"Must I drink *here*?" he seemed to
seek

The lady's will, with utterance meek

"Ay, ay," she said, "it so must be"—
(And this time she spake cheerfully)
"Behoves thee know *World's cruelty*"

He bowed his forehead till his mouth
Curved in the wave, and drank unloth,
As if from rivers of the south

His lip sobbed through the water rank,
His heart paused in him while he drank,
His brain beat heart-like—rose and sank,—

And he swooned backward to a dream,
Wherein he lay 'twixt gl om and gleam
With Death and Life at each extreme

And spiritual thunders, born of soul
Not cloud, did leap from mystic pole,
And o'er him roll and counter-roll,

Crushing their echoes reboant
With their own wheels Did Heaven
so grant
His spirit a sign of covenant ?

At last came silence A slow kiss
Did crown his forehead after this
His eyelids flew back for the bliss

The lady stood beside his head,
Smiling a thought, with hair dispread
The moonshine seemed dishevelled

In her sleek tresses manifold,—
Like Danae's in the rain of old,
That dripped with melancholy gold

But SHE was holy, pale, and high—
As one who saw an ecstasy
Beyond a foretold agony

" Rise up ! " said she, with voice
where song
Eddied through speech—" rise up !
be strong !
And learn how right avenges
wrong "

The poet rose up on his feet
He stood before an altar set
For sacrament, with vessels meet,

And mystic altar-lights which shine
As if their flames were crystalline
Carved flames that would not shrink
or pine

The altar filled the central place
Of a great church, and toward its face
Long aisles did shoot and interlace

And from it a continuous mist
Of incense (round the edges kissed
By a pure light of amethyst)

Wound upward slowly and throb-
bly,
Cloud within cloud, right silverly,
Cloud above cloud, victoriously,—

Broke full against the arched roof,
And, thence refracting, eddied off,
And floated through the marble woof

Of many a fine-wrought architrave —
Then, posing the white masses brave,
Swept solemnly down aisle and nave

And now in dark, and now in light,
The countless columns, glimmering
white,

Seemed leading out to the Infinite

Plunged half-way up the shaft they
showed,
In the pale shifting incense-cloud,
Which flowed them by, and over-
flowed,

Till mist and marble seemed to blend,
And the whole temple, at the end,
With its own incense to distend,—

The arches like a giant's bow
To bend and slacken,—and below,
The niched saints to come and go

Alone amid the shifting scene
That central altar stood serene
In its clear steadfast taper-sheen

Then first, the poet was aware
Of a chief-angel standing there
Before that altar, in the glare

His eyes were dreadful, for you saw
That *they* saw God—his lips and jaw
Grand-made and strong, as Sinai's
Law

They could enunciate, and refrain
From vibratory after-pain,
And his brow's height was sovereign

On the vast background of his wings
Arose his image, and he flings,
From each plumed arc, pale glitterings

And fiery flakes (as beateth more
Or less, the angel-heart) before
And round him, upon roof and floor,

Edging with fire the shifting fumes
While at his side, 'twixt lights and glooms,

The phantasm of an organ booms

Extending from which instrument
And angel, right and left-way bent,
The poet's sight grew sentient

Of a strange company around
And toward the altar,—pale and bound,

With bay above the eyes profound

Deathful their faces were, and yet
The power of life was in them set—
Never forgot, nor to forget

Sublime significance of mouth,
Dilated nostril full of youth,
And forehead royal with the truth

These faces were not multiplied
Beyond your count, but side by side
Did front the altar, glorified !

Still as a vision, yet exprest
Full as an action—look and geste
Of buried saint, in risen rest

The poet knew them Faint and dim
His spirits seemed to sink in him,
Then, like a dolphin, change and swim

The current—These were poets true,
Who died for Beauty, as martyrs do
For Truth—the ends being scarcely two

God's prophets of the Beautiful
These poets were—of iron rule,
The rugged cilix, serge of wool

Here, Homer, with the broad suspense
Of thunderous brows, and lips intense
Of garrulous god-innocence

There, Shakespeare ! on whose forehead climb

The crowns o' the World Oh, eyes sublime—

With tears and laughter for all time !

Here, Æschylus,—the women swooned
To see so awful, when he frowned
As the gods did !—he standeth crowned

Euripides, with close and mild
Scholastic lips—that could be wild,
And laugh or sob out like a child,

Even in the classes Sophocles,
With that king's look which, down
the trees,

Followed the dark effigies

Of the lost Theban Hesiod old,
Who, somewhat blind and deaf and cold,

Cared most for gods and bulls And bold

Electric Pindar, quick as fear,
With race-dust on his cheeks, and clear

Slant startled eyes that seem to hear

The chariot rounding the last goal,
To hurtle past it in his soul
And Sappho, crowned with gloriole

Of ebon hair on calmed brows—
O poet-woman ! none foregoes
The leap, attaining the repose !

Theocritus, with glittering locks
Dropt sideways, as betwixt the rocks
He watched the visionary flocks

And Aristophanes, who took
The world with mirth, and laughter-struck

The hollow caves of Thought and woke

The infinite echoes hid in each
And Virgil shade of Mantuan beech
Did help the shade of bay to reach

And knit around his forehead high,—
For his gods wore less majesty
Than his brown bees hummed death-
lessly

Lucretius—nobler than his mood
Who dropped his plummet down the broad

Deep universe, and said " No God,"

Finding no bottom he denied
Divinely the divine, and died
Chief poet on the Tiber-side,

By grace of God ! his face is stern
As one compelled in spite of scorn,
To teach a truth he could not learn.

And Ossian, dimly seen or guessed :
Once counted greater than the rest,
When mountain-winds blew out his vest

And Spenser drooped his dreaming head

(With languid sleep smile you had
said

From his own verse engendered)

On Ariosto's, till they ran
Their curls in one —The Italian
Shot numbler heat of bolder man

From his fine lids And Dante stern
And sweet, whose spirit was an urn
For wine and milk, poured out in turn
Hard-souled Alfieri, and fancy-
willed

Boiardo,—who with laughter filled
The pauses of the jostled shield

And Berni, with a hand stretched out
To sleek that storm And not
without

The wreath he died in, and the doubt

He died by, Tasso! bard and lover,
Whose visions were too thin to cover
The face of a false woman over

And soft Racine,—and grave Cor-
neille—

The orator of rhymes, whose wail
Scarce shook his purple And Pe-
trarch pale,

From whose brainlighted heart were
thrown

A thousand thoughts beneath the sun,
Each lucid with the name of One

And Camoens, with that look he had,
Compelling India's Genius sad
From the wave through the Lusiad,—

The murmurs of the storm-cape
ocean

Indrawn in vibrative emotion
Along the verse And while devotion

In his wild eyes fantastic shone
Under the tonsure blown upon
By airs celestial,—Calderon

And bold De Vega,—who breathed
quick

Verse after verse, till death's old trick
Put pause to life and rhetoric

And Goethe—with that reaching eye
His soul reached out from, far and
high,

And fell from inner entity

And Schiller, with heroic front
Worthy of Plutarch's kiss upon't,—
Too large for wreath of modern wont

And Chaucer, with his infantine
Familiar clasp of things divine—
That mark upon his lip is wine

Here, Milton's eyes strike piercing-
dim

The shapes of suns and stars did swim
Like clouds from them, and granted
him

God for sole vision Cowley, there,
Whose active fancy debonair
Drew straws like amber—foul to fair

Drayton and Browne,—with smiles
they drew

From outward Nature, still kept new
From their own inward nature true

And Marlowe, Webster, Fletcher,
Ben—

Whose fire-hearts sowed our furrows,
when

The world was worthy of such men

And Burns, with pungent passionings
Set in his eyes Deep lyric springs
Are of the fire-mount's issuings

And Shelley, in his white ideal,
All statue blind! And Keats the real
Adonis, with the hymeneal

Fresh vernal buds half sunk between
His youthful curls, kissed straight and
sheen

In his Rome-grave, by Venus queen

And poor, proud Byron,—sad as
grave,

And salt as life forlornly brave,
And quivering with the dart he drave

And visionary Coleridge, who
Did sweep his thoughts as angels do
Their wings, with cadence up the
Blue

These poets faced (and other more)
The lighted altar booming o'er
The clouds of incense dim and hoar

And all their faces, in the lull
Of natural things, looked wonderful
With life and death and deathless
rule

All, still as stone, and yet intense,
As if by spirit's vehemence
That stone were carved, and not by
sense

But where the heart of each should
beat,
There seemed a wound instead of it,
From whence the blood dropped to
their feet

Drop after drop—dropped heavily,
As century follows century
Into the deep eternity

Then said the lady—and her word
Came distant,—as wide waves were
stirred
Between her and the ear that
heard,—

"*World's use* is cold—*world's love* is
vain,—
World's cruelty is bitter bane,
But pain is not the fruit of pain

"Hearken, O poet, whom I led
From the dark wood! Dismissing
dread,
Now hear this angel in my stead

"His organ's clavier strikes along
These poets' hearts, sonorous, strong,
They gave him without count of
wrong,—

"A diapason whence to guide
Up to God's feet, from these who
died,
An anthem fully glorified

"Whereat God's blessing IBARAK
(יְבָרַךְ)

Breathes back this music—folds it
back

About the earth in vapoury rack

"And men walk in it, crying 'Lo!
The world is wider and we know
The very heavens look brighter so

"The stars move statelier round the
edge

Of the silver spheres, and give in
pledge

Their light for nobler privilege

"No little flower but joys or
grieves—

Full life is rustling in the sheaves,—
Full spirit sweeps the forest-
leaves'

"So works this music on the earth,
God so admits it, sends it forth,
To add another worth to worth—

"A new creation-bloom that rounds
The old creation, and expounds
His Beautiful in tuneful sounds

"Now hearken!" Then the poet
gazed

Upon the angel glorious-faced,
Whose hand, majestically raised,

Floated across the organ-keys,
Like a pale moon o'er murmuring seas,
With no touch but with influences

Then rose and fell (with swell and
swoond

Of shapeless noises wandering round
A concord which at last they found)

Those mystic keys—the tones were
mixed,

Dim, faint, and thrilled and throbbed
betwixt

The incomplete and the unfixed

And therein mighty minds were heard
In mighty musings, inly stirred,
And struggling outward for a word

Until these surges, having run
This way and that, gave out as one
An Aphrodite of sweet tune,—

A Harmony, that finding vent,
Upward in grand ascension went
Winged to a heavenly argument—

Up, upward! like a saint who strips
The shroud back from his eyes and
lips,

And rises in apocalypse

A harmony sublime and plain,
Which cleft (as flying swan, the rain,—
Throwing the drops off with a strain

Of her white wing) those under-
tones

Of perplexed chords, and soared at once
And struck out from the starry
thrones

Their several silver octaves as
It passed to God The music was
Of divine stature—strong to pass

And those who heard it, understood
Something of life in spirit and blood—
Something of nature's fair and good

And while it sounded, those great
souls

Did thrill as racers at the goals,
And burn in all their aureoles

But she, the lady, as vapour-bound,
 Stood calmly in the joy of sound,—
 Like Nature with the showers around
 And when it ceased, the blood which
 fell,

Again, alone grew audible,
 Tolling the silence as a bell

The sovran angel lifted high
 His hand, and spake out sovranly—
 ‘Tried poets hearken and reply !

“Give me true answers If we grant
 That not to suffer, is to want
 The conscience of the jubilant,—

“If ignorance of anguish is
But ignorance,—and mortals miss
 Far prospects, by a level bliss,—

“If, as two colours must be viewed
 In a visible image, mortals should
 Need good and evil, to see good,—

“If to speak nobly, comprehends
 To feel profoundly—if the ends
 Of power and suffering, Nature
 blends,—

“If poets on the tripod must
 Writhe like the Pythian, to make just
 Their oracles, and merit trust,—

“If every vatic word that sweeps
 To change the world, must pale their
 lips,
 And leave their own souls in eclipse,—

“If to search deep the universe
 Must pierce the searcher with the
 curse,—

Because that bolt (in man’s reverse),

“Was shot to the heart o’ the wood,
 and lies

Wedged deepest in the best,—if eyes
 That look for visions and surprise

“From influent angels, must shut
 down

Their lids first, upon sun and moon,
 The head asleep upon a stone,—

“If ONE Who did redeem you back,
 By His own loss, from final wrack,
 Did consecrate by touch and track

“Those temporal sorrows, till the
 taste

Of brackish waters of the waste
 Is salt with tears He dropt too fast,—

“If all the crowns of earth must
 wound

With prickings of the thorns He
 found,—

If saddest sighs swell sweetest
 sound,—

“What say ye unto this ?—refuse
 This baptism in salt water ?—choose
 Calm breasts, mute lips, and labour
 loose ?

‘Or, oh ye gifted givers ! ye
 Who give your liberal hearts to me,
 To make the world this harmony,—

“Are ye resigned that they be spent
 To such world’s help ?”—

The Spirits bent
 Their awful brows and said—“Content”

Content ! it sounded like *Amen*,
 Said by a choir of mourning men—
 An affirmation full of pain

And patience,—ay, of glorying
 And adoration,—as a king
 Might seal an oath for governing

Then said the angel—and his face
 Lightened abroad, until the place
 Grew larger for a moment’s space,—

The long aisles flashing out in light
 And nave and transept, columns white,
 And arches crossed, being clear to
 sight

As if the roof were off and all
 Stood in the noon-sun,—“Lo ! I call
 To other hearts as liberal

“This pedal strikes out in the air
 My instrument has room to bear
 Still ruller strains and perfecter

“Herein is room, and shall be room
 While Time lasts, for new hearts to
 come

Consummating while they consume

“What living man will bring a gift
 Of his own heart, and help to lift
 The tune ?—The race is to the swift”

So asked the angel Straight the
 while,

A company came up the aisle
 With measured step and sorted
 smile,—

Cleaving the incense-clouds that rise,
With winking unaccustomed eyes,
And love-locks smelling sweet of spice

One bore his head above the rest,
As if the world were dispossessed—
And One did pillow chin on breast,

Right languid—as an as he should faint
One shook his curls across his paint,
And moralised on worldly taint

One, slanting up his face, did wink
The salt rheum to the eyelid's brink,
To think—O gods! or—not to think!

Some trod out stealthily and slow,
As if the sun would fall in snow,
If they walked to instead of fro

And some with conscious ambling
free,

Did shake their bells right daintily
On hand and foot, for harmony

And some composing sudden sighs
In attitudes of point-device,
Rehearsed impromptu agonies

And when this company drew near
The spirits crowned, it might appear
Submitted to a ghastly fear

As a sane eye in master-passion
Constrains a maniac to the fashion
Of hideous maniac imitation

In the least geste—the dropping low
O' the lid—the wrinkling of the brow,—
Exaggerate with mock and mow,—

So, mastered was that company
By the crowned vision utterly,
Swayed to a maniac mockery

One dulled his eyeballs as they ached
With Homer's forehead—though he
lacked

An inch of any And one racked

His lower lip with restless tooth,—
As Pindar's rushing words forsooth
Were pent behind it One, his
smooth

Pink cheeks did rumple passionate,
Like Æschylus—and tried to prate
On trollying tongue of fate and fate

One set her eyes like Sappho's—or
Any light woman's! one forbore
Like Dante, or any man as poor

In mirth, to let a smile undo
His hard shut lips And one, that
drew

Sour humours from his mother, blew

His sunken cheeks out to the size
Of most unnatural jollities,
Because Anacreon looked jest-wise

So with the rest—It was a sight
A great world-laughter would requite,
Or great world-wrath, with equal
right!

Out came a speaker from that crowd
To speak for all—in sleek and proud
Exordial periods, while he bowed

His knee before the angel—"Thus,
O angel, who hast called for us,
We bring thee service emulous,—

"Fit service from sufficient soul—
Hand-service, to receive world's dole—
Lip-service, in world's ear to roll

"Adjusted concords—soft enow
To hear the wine-cups passing through,
And not too grave to spoil the snow

"Thou, certes, when thou askest more,
O sapient angel leanest o'er
The window-sill of metaphor

"To give our hearts up! fie!—That
rage

Barbaric antedates the age
It is not done on any stage

"Because your scald or gleeman went
With seven- or nine-stringed instru-
ment

Upon his back—must ours be bent?

"We are not pilgrims, by your leave
No, nor yet martyrs! if we grieve,
It is to rhyme to summer eve

"And if we labour, it shall be
As suiteth best with our degree,
In after-dinner reverie"

More yet that speaker would have
said,—

Poising, between his smiles fair-fed,
Each separate phrase till finished

But all the foreheads of those born
And dead true poets flashed with scorn
Betwixt the bay leaves round them
worn—

Ay, jetted such brave fire, that they,
The new-come, shrank and paled away,
Like leaden ashes when the day

Strikes on the hearth A spuit-blast,
A presence known by power, at last
Took them up mutely—they had
passed

And he, our pilgrim-poet, saw
Only their places, in deep awe —
What time the angel's smile did draw

His gazing upward Smiling on,
The angel in the angel shone,
Revealing glory in benison

Till, ripened in the light which shut
The poet in, his spirit mute
Dropped sudden, as a perfect fruit

He fell before the angel's feet,
Saying—" If what is true is sweet,
In something I may compass it

" For, where my worthiness is poor,
My will stands richly at the door,
To pay short-comings evermore

" Accept me therefore—Not for price,
And not for pride, my sacrifice
Is tendered ' for my soul is nice,

"And will beat down those dusty seeds
Of bearded corn, if she succeeds
In soaring while the covey feeds

" I soar—I am drawn up like the lark
To its white cloud So high my mark,
Albeit my wing is small and dark

" I ask no wages—seek no fame
Sew me, for shroud round face and
name,
God's banner of the oriflamme

" I only would have leave to loose
(In tears and blood, if so He choose)
Mine inward music out to use,

" I only would be spent—in pain
And 'oss, perchance—but not in vain,
Upon the sweetness of that strain,—

" Only project, beyond the bound
Of mine own life, so lost and found,
My voice, and live on in its sound,—

" Only embrace and be embraced
By fiery ends,—whereby to waste,
And light God's future with my past "

The angel's smile grew more divine—
The mortal speaking—ay, its shine
Swelled fuller, like a choir-note fine,

Till the broad glory round his brow,
Did vibrate with the light below,
But what he said, I do not know

Nor know I if the man who prayed,
Rose up accepted unforbade,
From the church-floor where he was
laid,—

Nor if a listening life did run
Through the king-poets, one by one
Rejoicing in a worthy son

My soul, which might have seen, grew
blind

By what it looked on I can find
No certain count of things behind

I saw alone, dim white and grand
As in a dream, the angel's hand
Stretched forth in gesture of command

Straight through the haze—And so,
as erst,

A strain more noble than the first
Mused in the organ, and outburst

With giant march, from floor to roof
Rose the full notes —now parted off
In pauses massively aloof,

Like measured thunders,—now re-
joined

In concords of mysterious kind
Which fused together sense and
mind,—

Now flashing sharp on sharp along
Exultant, in a mounting throng,—
Now dying off to a low song

Fed upon minors!—wavelike sounds
Re-eddying into silver rounds,
Enlarging liberty with bounds

And every rhythm that seemed to close
Survived in confluent underflows
Symphonious with the next that rose

Thus the whole strain being multiplied
And greatedened,—with its glorified
Wings shot abroad from side to side,—

Waved backward (as a wind might
wave

A Broken mist, and with as brave
Wild roaring) arch and architrave

Aisle, transept, column marble wall,—
Then swelling outward, prodigal
Of aspiration beyond thrall,

Soared,—and drew up with it the
whole

Of this said vision—as a soul
Is raised by a thought! And as a roll

Of bright devices is unrolled
Still upward, with a gradual gold,—
So rose the vision manifold,

Angel and organ, and the round
Of spirits, solemnised and crowned,—
While the freed clouds of incense
wound

Ascending, following in their track,
And glimmering faintly, like the rack
O' the moon, in her own light cast
back

And as that solemn Dream withdrew,
The lady's kiss did fall anew
Cold on the poet's brow as dew

And that same kiss which bound him
first

Beyond the senses, now reversed
Its own law, and most subtly pierced

His spirit with the sense of things
Sensual and present Vanishings
Of glory, with Æolian wings

Struck him and passed the lady's
face

Did melt back in the chrysopras
Of the orient morning sky that was

Yet clear of lark,—and there and so
She melted, as a star might do,
Still smiling as she melted—slow,

Smiling so slow, he seemed to see
Her smile the last thing, gloriously,
Beyond her—far as memory

Then he looked round he was alone—
He lay before the breaking sun,
As Jacob at the Bethel stone

And thought's entangled skein being
wound,

He knew the moorland of his swound,
And the pale pools that seared the
ground,—

The far wood-pines, like offing ships—
The fourth pool's yew anear him
drips

World's cruelty attaints his lips,

And still he tastes it—bitter still—
Through all that glorious possible
He had the sight of present ill!

Yet rising calmly up and slowly
With such a cheer as scorneth folly,
A mild delightsome melancholy,

He journeyed homeward through the
wood,

And prayed along the solitude,
Betwixt the pines,—“O God, my
God!”

The golden morning's open flowings
Did sway the trees to murmurous
bowings,

In metric chant of blessed poems

And passing homeward through the
wood,

He prayed along the solitude,—
“Thou, Poet-God, art great and
good!”

“And though we must have, and
have had

Right reason to be earthly sad,—
Thou, Poet-God, art great and glad”

CONCLUSION

Life treads on life, and heart on
heart—

We press too close on church and mart,
To keep a dream or grave apart

And I was 'ware of walking down
That same green forest where had gone
The poet-pilgrim One by one

I traced his footsteps From the east
A red and tender radiance pressed
Through the near trees, until I guessed

The sun behind shone full and round,
While up the leafiness profound
A wind scarce old enough for sound

Stood ready to blow on me when
I turned that way, and now and then
The birds sang and brake off again

To shake their pretty feathers dry
Of the dew sliding droppingly
From the leaf-edges, and apply

Back to their song 'Twixt dew and
bird

So sweet a silence ministered,
God seemed to use it for a word

Yet morning souls did leap and run
In all things, as the least had won
A joyous insight of the sun

And no one looking round the wood
Could help confessing, as he stood,
" *This Poet-God is glad and good* "

But hark ! a distant sound that
grows !

A heaving, sinking of the boughs—
A rustling murmur, not of those !

A breezy noise, which is not breeze !
And white-clad children by degrees
Steal out in troops among the trees

Fair little children, morning-bright,
With faces grave, yet soft-to sight,—
Expressive of restrained delight

Some plucked the palm-boughs within
reach,

And others leapt up high to catch
The upper boughs, and shake from
each

A rain of dew, till, wetted so,
The child who held the branch let go,
And it swang backward with a flow

Of faster drippings Then I knew
The children laughed—but the laugh
flew

From its own chirrup, as might do

A frightened song bird , and a child
Who seemed the chief, said very mild,
" Hush ! keep this morning undefiled "

His eyes rebuked them from calm
spheres ,

His soul upon his brow appears
In waiting for more holy years

I called the child to me, and said,
" What are your palms for ? "—" To
be spread,"

He answered, " on a poet dead

" The poet died last month , and now
The world which had been somewhat
slow

In honouring his living brow,

" Commands the palms—They must
be strown

On his new marble very soon,
In a procession of the town "

I sighed and said, " Did he foresee
Any such honour ? " " Verily
I cannot tell you," answered he

" But this I know,—I fain would lay
Mine own head down, another day,
As *he* did,—with the fame away

" A lily, a friend's hand had plucked,
Lay by his death-bed which he looked
As deep down as a bee had sucked,

" Then, turning to the lattice, gazed
O'er hill and river, and upraised
His eyes illumined and amazed

" With the world's beauty, up to God,
Re-offering on his iris broad
The images of things bestowed

" By the chief Poet,—' God ! ' he
cried,

' Be praised for anguish, which has
tried ,

For Beauty, which has satisfied —

" ' For this world's presence, half
within

And half without me—sound and
scene—

This sense of Being and Having been

" ' I thank Thee that my soul hath
room

For Thy grand world ! Both guests
may come—

Beauty, to soul—Body, to tomb !

" ' I am content to be so weak,—
Put strength into the words I speak,
And I am strong in what I seek

" ' I am content to be so bare
Before the archers , everywhere
My wounds being stroked by heavenly
air

" ' I laid my soul before Thy feet,
That Images of fair and sweet
Should walk to other men on it

" ' I am content to feel the step
Of each pure Image !—let those keep
To mandragore, who care to sleep

" ' I am content to touch the brink
Of the other goblet, and I think
My bitter drink a wholesome drink

" ' Because my portion was assigned
Wholesome and bitter—Thou art
kind,

And I am blessed to my mind

" ' Gifted for giving, I receive
The maythorn, and its scent outgive !
I grieve not that I once did grieve

" ' In my large joy of sight and touch
Beyond what others count for such,
I am content to suffer much

" *I know*—is all the mourner saith,—
Knowledge by suffering entereth,
And Life is perfected by Death "

The child spake nobly Strange to
hear,
His infantine soft accents clear
Charged with high meanings, did
appear,—

And fair to see, his form and face,—
Winged out with whiteness and pure
grace

From the green darkness of the place

Behind his head a palm-tree grew
An orient beam, which pierced it
through,

Transversely on his forehead drew

The figure of a palm-branch brown,
Traced on its brightness up and down
In fine fair lines,—a shadow-crown

Guido might paint his angels so—
A little angel, taught to go
With holy words to saints below

Such innocence of action yet
Significance of object met
In his whole bearing strong and sweet

And all the children, the whole band,
Did round in rosy reverence stand,
Each with a palm-bough in his hand

" And so he died," I whispered,—

" Nay,
Not so," the childish voice did say—
" That poet turned him, first, to pray

" In silence, and God heard the rest,
"Twixt the sun's footsteps down the
west

Then he called one who loved him
best,

" Yea, he called softly through the
room

(His voice was weak yet tender)—
' Come '

He said, ' come nearer ! Let the
bloom

" ' Of Life grow over, undenied,
This bridge of Death, which is not
wide—

I shall be soon at the other side

" ' Come, kiss me ! ' So the one in
truth

Who loved him best—in love, not ruth,
Bowed down and kissed him mouth
to mouth

" And, in that kiss of Love was won
Life's manumission All was done—
The mouth that k ssed last, kissed
alone

" But in the former, confluent kiss,
The same was sealed, I think, by His
To words of truth and uprightness "

The child's voice trembled—his lips
shook

Like a rose leaning o'er a brook,
Which vibrates though it is not
struck

" And who," I asked, a little moved
Yet curious-eyed, " was this that
loved

And kissed him last as it behoved ? "

" I," softly said the child, and then,
" I " said he louder once again

" *His son*,—my rank is, among men.

" And now that men exalt his name
I come to gather palms with them,
That holy Love may hallow Fame

" He did not die alone, nor should
His memory live so, 'mid these rude
World-praisers—a worse solitude

" Me, a voice calleth to that tomb
Where these are strewing branch and
bloom,

Saying, *Come nearer !*—and I come.

" Glory to God ! " resumed he,—
And his eyes smiled for victory
O'er their own tears, which I could see

Fallen on the palm, down cheek and
chin—

" That poet now hath entered in '
The place of rest which is not sin

" And while he rests, his songs in
troops

Walk up and down our earthly slopes,
Companioned by diviner Hopes "

" But *thou*," I murmured—to engage
The child's speech farther,— " hast an
age

Too tender for this orphanage "

"Glory to God—to God!" he saith—
 "KNOWLEDGE BY SUFFERING EN-
 TERETH,
 AND LIFE IS PERFECTED BY DEATH"

RHYME OF THE DUCHESS MAY

I
 To the belfry, one by one went the
 ringers from the sun,—

Toll slowly
 And the oldest ringer said, "Ours is
 music for the Dead
 When the rebecks are all done"

II
 Six abeles i' the churchyard grow on
 the north side in a row,

Toll slowly
 And the shadows of their tops, rock
 across the little slopes
 Of the grassy graves below

III
 On the south side and the west, a
 small river runs in haste,—

Toll slowly
 And between the river flowing and
 the fair green trees a-growing,
 Do the dead lie at their rest

IV
 On the east I sate that day, up against
 a willow grey —

Toll slowly
 Through the rain of willow-branches,
 I could see the low hill-ranges,
 And the river on its way

V
 There I sate beneath the tree, and
 the bell tolled solemnly,—

Toll slowly
 While the trees' and rivers' voices
 flowed between the solemn
 noises,—

Yet death seemed more loud to me

VI
 There, I read this ancient rhyme
 while the bell did all the time

Toll slowly
 And the solemn knell fell in with the
 tale of life and sin,
 Like a rhythmic fate sublime

THE RHYME

I
 Broad the forest stood (I read) on the
 hills of Linteged,—
Toll slowly

And three hundred years had stood
 mute adown each hoary wood,
 Like a full heart having prayed

II
 And the little birds sang east and
 the little birds sang west —

Toll slowly
 And but little thought was theirs
 of the silent antique years,
 In the building of their nest

III
 Down the sun dropt large and red,
 on the towers of Linteged,—

Toll slowly
 Lance and spear upon the height,
 bristling strange in fiery light,
 While the castle stood in shade

IV
 There, the castle stood up black,
 with the red sun at its back,—

Toll slowly
 Like a sullen smouldering pyre, with
 a top that flickers fire
 When the wind is on its track

V
 And five hundred archers tall did be-
 siege the castle wall,—

Toll slowly
 And the castle seethed in blood, four-
 teen days and nights had stood,
 And to-night, anears its fall

VI
 Yet thereunto, blind to doom, three
 months since, a bride did come,—

Toll slowly
 One who proudly trod the floors and
 softly whispered in the doors
 "May good angels bless our home"

VII
 Oh, a bride of queenly eyes, with a
 front of constancies,—

Toll slowly
 Oh, a bride of cordial mouth,—where
 the untired smile of youth
 Did light outward its own sighs

VIII
 'Twas a Duke's fair orphan-girl, and
 her uncle's ward, the Earl,—

Toll slowly
 Who betrothed her twelve years old,
 for the sake of dowry gold,
 To his son Lord Leigh, the churl

IX

But what time she had made good
all her years of womanhood,—
Toll slowly

Unto both those Lords of Leigh, spake
she out right sovranly,
"My will runneth as my blood

X

"And while this same blood makes
red this same right hand's veins,"
she said,—
Toll slowly

"'Tis my will, as lady free, not to
wed a Lord of Leigh,
But Sir Guy of Linteged "

XI

The old Earl he smiled smooth, then
he sighed for wilful youth,—
Toll slowly

"Good my niece, that hand withal,
looketh somewhat soft and small
For so large a will, in sooth "

XII

She, too, smiled by that same sign—
but her smile was cold and fine,—
Toll slowly

"Little hand clasps muckle gold,
or it were not worth the hold
Of thy son, good uncle mine ! "

XIII

Then the young Lord jerked his
breath, and sware thickly in his
teeth,—
Toll slowly

"He would wed his own betrothed,
an she loved him an she loathed,
Let the life come or the death "

XIV

Up she rose with scornful eyes, as her
father's child might rise,—
Toll slowly

"Thy hound's blood, my Lord of
Leigh, stains thy knightly heel,"
quoth she,
"And he moans not where he lies

XV

"But a woman's will dies hard, in the
hall or on the sward !"—
Toll slowly

"By that grave, my lords, which
made me orphaned girl and
dowered lady,
I deny you wife and ward "

XVI

Unto each she bowed her head, and
swept past with lofty tread
Toll slowly

Ere the midnight-bell had ceased, in
the chapel had the priest
Blessed her bride of Linteged

XVII

Fast and fain the bridal train along
the night-storm rode amain —
Toll slowly

Hard the steeds of lord and serf
struck their hoofs out on the turf,
In the pauses of the rain

XVIII

Fast and fain the kinsmen's train
along the storm pursued amain—
Toll slowly

Steed on steed-track dashing off—
thickening, doubling, hoof on
hoof,
In the pauses of the rain

XIX

And the bridegroom led the flight
on his red-roan steed of might,—
Toll slowly

And the bride lay on his arm, still, as
if she feared no harm,
Smiling out into the night

XX

'Dost thou fear ?' he said at last,—
—"Nay !" she answered him
in haste,—
Toll slowly

"Not such death as we could find—
only life with one behind—
Ride on fast as fear—ride fast !"

XXI

Up the mountain wheeled the steed
—girth to ground, and fetlocks
spread,—
Toll slowly

Headlong bounds and rocking flanks,
—down he staggered—down the
banks
To the towers of Linteged.

XXII

High and low the serfs looked out,
red the flambeaus tossed about,—
Toll slowly

In the courtyard rose the cry—
"Live the Duchess and Sir
Guy !"
But she never heard them shout.

XXIII

On the steed she dropt her cheek,
kissed his mane and kissed his
neck,—

Toll slowly

"I had happier died by thee, than
lived on a Lady Leigh"
Were the words which she did
speak

XXIV

But a three months' joyaunce lay
'twixt that moment and to-day,—

Toll slowly

When five hundred archers tall
stand beside the castle wall,
To recapture Duchess May

XXV

And the castle standeth black, with
the red sun at its back,—

Toll slowly

And a fortnight's siege is done—and,
except the Duchess, none
Can misdoubt the coming wrack

XXVI

Then the captain, young Lord Leigh,
with his eyes so grey of blee—

Toll slowly

And thin lips that scarcely sheathe
the cold white gnashing of his
teeth

Gnashed in smiling, absently,—

XXVII

Cried aloud—"So goes the day bride-
groom fair of Duchess May!"—

Toll slowly

"Look thy last upon that sun If
thou seest to-morrow's one,
'Twill be through a foot of clay

XXVIII

"Ha fair bride! Dost hear no
sound, save that moaning of the
hound?"—

Toll slowly

"Thou and I have parted troth,—
yet I keep my vengeance-oath,
And the other may come round

XXIX

"Ha! thy will is brave to dare, and
thy new love past compare,"—

Toll slowly

"Yet thine old love's falchion brave
is as strong a thing to have,
As the will of lady fair

XXX

"Peck on blindly netted dove!—If
a wife's name thee behove,"—

Toll slowly

"Thou shalt wear the same to-mor-
row, ere the grave has hid the
sorrow
Of thy last ill-mated love

XXXI

"O'er his fixed and silent mouth,
thou and I will call back troth,"—

Toll slowly

"He shall altar be and priest,—and
he will not cry at least
'I forbid you—I am loth!'

XXXII

"I will wring thy fingers pale, in the
gauntlet of my mal!"—

Toll slowly

"'Little hand and muckle gold' close
shall he within my hold,
As the sword did, to prevail!"

XXXIII

Oh, the little birds sang east, and the
little birds sang west,—

Toll slowly

Oh, and laughed the Duchess May,
and her soul did put away—
All his boasting, for a jest

XXXIV

In her chamber did she sit, laughing
low to think of it,—

Toll slowly

"Tower is strong and will is free—
thou canst boast, my Lord of
Leigh,—
But thou boastest little wit!"

XXXV

In her tire-glass gazed she, and she
blushed right womanly,—

Toll slowly

She blushed half from her disdain—
half, her beauty was so plain,
—"Oath for oath, my Lord of
Leigh!"

XXXVI

Straight she called her maidens in—
"Since ye gave me blame here-
in,"—

Toll slowly

"That a bridal such as mine should
lack gauds to make it fine,
Come and shrive me from that sin,

XXXVII

"It is three months gone to-day, since
I gave mine hand away"—

Toll slowly

"Bring the gold and bring the gem,
we will keep bride-state in them,
While we keep the foe at bay

XXXVIII

"On your arms I loose mine hair,—
comb it smooth and crown it
fair,"—

Toll slowly

"I would look in purple pall from
this lattice down the wall,
And throw scorn to one that's
there!"

XXXIX

Oh, the little birds sang east, and the
little birds sang west,—

Toll slowly

On the tower the castle's lord leant
in silence on his sword,
With an anguish in his breast

XL

With a spirit-laden weight, did he
lean down passionate,—

Toll slowly

They have almost sapped the wall,—
they will enter therewithal,
With no knocking at the gate

XLI

Then the sword he leant upon,
shivered—snapped upon the
stone,—

Toll slowly

"Sword," he thought, with inward
laugh, "ill thou servest for a
staff

When thy nobler use is done!

XLII

"Sword, thy nobler use is done!—
tower is lost, and shame
begun"—

Toll slowly

"If we met them in the breach, hilt
to hilt or speech to speech,
We should die there, each for one

XLIII

"If we met them at the wall, we
should singly, vainly fall,"—

Toll slowly

"But if I die here alone,—then I
die, who am but one,
And die nobly for them all,

XLIV

"Five true friends lie for my sake—
in the moat and in the brake,"—

Toll slowly

"Thirteen warriors lie at rest, with
a black wound in the breast,
And not one of these will wake

XLV

"And no more of this shall be!—heart-
blood weighs too heavily,"—

Toll slowly

"And I could not sleep in grave, with
the faithful and the brave
Heaped around and over me

XLVI

"Since young Clare a mother hath,
and young Ralph a plighted
faith,"—

Toll slowly

"Since my pale young sister's cheeks
blush like rose when Ronald
speaks,
Albert never a word she saith—

XLVII

"These shall never die for me—life-
blood falls too heavily"—

Toll slowly

"And if I die here apart,—o'er my
dead and silent heart
They shall pass out safe and free

XLVIII

"When the foe hath heard it said—
'Death holds Guy of Linteged,'"—

Toll slowly

"That new corse new peace shall
bring, and a blessed, blessed
thing
Shall the stone be at its head

XLIX

"Then my friends shall pass out free,
and shall bear my memory,"—

Toll slowly

"Then my foes shall sleek their pride,
soothing fair my widowed bride
Whose sole sin was love of me

L

"With their words all smooth and
sweet, they will front her and
entreat,"—

Toll slowly

"And their purple pall will spread
underneath her fainting head,
While her tears drop over it,

LI

"She will weep her woman's tears,
she will pray her woman's
prayers"—

Toll slowly

"But her heart is young in pain, and
her hopes will spring again
By the suntime of her years

LII

"Ah, sweet May—ah, sweetest grief!
—once I vowed thee my belief,"—

Toll slowly

"That thy name expressed thy
sweetness,—May of poets, in
completeness!

Now my May-day seemeth brief "

LIII

All these silent thoughts did swim
o'er his eyes grown strange and
dim,—

Toll slowly

"Till his true men in the place wished
they stood there face to face
With the foe instead of him

LIV

"One last oath, my friends that
wear faithful hearts to do and
dare! "

Toll slowly

"Tower must fall, and bride be lost!
—swear me service worth the
cost,"
—Bold they stood around to
swear

LV

"Each man clasp my hand and
swear, by the deed we failed in
there,"—

Toll slowly

"Not for vengeance, not for right, will
ye strike one blow to-night! "

Pale they stood around—to swear

LVI

"One last boon, young Ralph and
Clare! faithful hearts to do and
dare! "

Toll slowly

"Bring that steed up from his stall,
which she kissed before you all,—
Guide him up the turret-stair

LVII

"Ye shall harness him aright, and
lead upward to this height! "

Toll slowly.

"Once in love and twice in war, hath
he borne me strong and far,
He shall bear me far to-night "

LVIII

Then his men looked to and fro,
when they heard him speaking
so,—

Toll slowly

"—'Las! the noble heart," they
thought,—"he in sooth is grief-
distraught

Would we stood here with the foe! "

LIX

But a fire flashed from his eye, 'twixt
their thought and their reply,—

Toll slowly

"Have ye so much time to waste?
We who ride here must ride fast,
As we wish our foes to fly "

LX

They have fetched the steed with care,
in the harness he did wear —

Toll slowly

Past the court and through the doors,
across the rushes of the floors,
But they goad him up the stair

LXI

Then from out her bower chambère,
did the Duchess May repair,—

Toll slowly

"Tell me now what is your need,"
said the lady, "of this steed,
That ye goad him up the stair? "

LXII

Calm she stood! unbodkin'd through,
fell her dark hair to her shoe,—

Toll slowly

And the smile upon her face, ere she
left the tiring-glass,
Had not time enough to go

LXIII

"Get thee back, sweet Duchess May!
hope is gone like yesterday,"—

Toll slowly

"One half-hour completes the breach,
and thy lord grows wild of
speech —

Get thee in, sweet lady, and pray.

LXIV

"In the east tower, high'st of all,—
loud he cries for steed from stall,"—

Toll slowly

" 'He would ride as far,' quoth he,
'as for love and victory,
Though he rides the castle-wall '

LXV

" And we fetch the steed from stall,
upwhere never a hoof did fall "—

Toll slowly

" Wifely prayer meets deathly need '
may the sweet Heavens hear thee
plead,
If he rides the castle-wall "

LXVI

Low she dropt her head and lower,
till her hair coiled on the floor,—

Toll slowly

And tear after tear you heard, fall
distinct as any word
Which you might be listening
for

LXVII

" Get thee in, thou soft ladye!—
here, is never a place for thee! "

Toll slowly

" Braid thine hair and clasp thy
gown, that thy beauty in its
moan

May find grace with Leigh of
Leigh "

LXVIII

She stood up in bitter case, with a
pale yet steady face,—

Toll slowly

Like a statue thunderstruck, which
though quivering seems to look
Right against the thunder-place

LXIX

And her foot trod in, with pride her
own tears ' the stone beside,—

Toll slowly

" Go to, faithful friends, go to!—
Judge no more what ladies do,—
No, nor how their lords may ride! "

LXX

Then the good steed's rem she took
and his neck did kiss and
stroke —

Toll slowly

Soft he neighed to answer her, and
then followed up the stair,
For the love of her sweet look

LXXI

Oh, and steeply, steeply wound up
the narrow stair around,—

Toll slowly

Oh, and closely, closely speeding,
step by step beside her treading,—
Did he follow, meek as hound

LXXII

On the east tower, high'st of all,—
there, where never a hoof did
fall,—

Toll slowly

Out they swept, a vision steady,—
noble steed and lovely lady,
Calm as if in bower or stall

LXXIII

Down she knelt at her lord's knee,
and she looked up silently,—

Toll slowly

And he kissed her twice and thrice,
for that look within her eyes
Which he could not bear to see

LXXIV

Quoth he, " Get thee from this
strife,—and the sweet saints
bless thy life! " —

Toll slowly

" In this hour, I stand in need of
my noble red-roan steed—
But no more of my noble wife "

LXXV

Quoth she, " Meekly have I done all
thy biddings under sun " —

Toll slowly

" But by all my womanhood, which
is proved so, true and good,
I will never do this one

LXXVI

" Now, by womanhood's degree, and
by wifehood's verity,—

Toll slowly

" In this hour if thou hast need of
thy noble red-roan steed,
Thou hast also need of me

LXXVII

" By this golden ring ye see on this
lifted hand pardie,—

Toll slowly

" If, this hour, on castle wall can be
room for steed from stall,
Shall be also room for me

LXXVIII

" So the sweet saints with me be,"
(did she utter solemnly) —

Toll slowly

" If a man, this eventide, on this
castle wall will ride,
He shall ride the same with me "

LXXXIX

Oh, he sprang up in the selle, and he
laughed out bitter-well,—

Toll slowly

"Wouldst thou ride among the
leaves, as we used on other eves,
To hear chime a vesper-bell?"

LXXX

She clang closer to his knee—"Ay,
beneath the cypress-tree!"—

Toll slowly

"Mock me not, for otherwhere, than
along the greenwood fair,
Have I ridden fast with thee!"

LXXXI

"Fast I rode, with new-made vows
from my angry kinsman's house!"

Toll slowly

"What! and would you men should
reck, that I dared more for love's
sake
As a bride than as a spouse?"

LXXXII

"What, and would you it should fall,
as a proverb, before all,"—

Toll slowly

"That a bride may keep your side
while through castle-gate you
ride,
Yet eschew the castle wall?"

LXXXIII

Ho! the breach yawns into ruin, and
roars up against her sung,—

Toll slowly

With the inarticulate din, and the
dreadful falling in—
Shrieks of doing and undoing!"

LXXXIV

Twice he wrung her hands in twain,
but the small hands closed
again,—

Toll slowly

Back he reined the steed—back,
back! but she trailed along his
track,
With a frantic clasp and strain

LXXXV

Evermore the foemen pour through
the crash of window and door,—

Toll slowly

And the shouts of "Leigh" and
"Leigh," and the shrieks of
"kill!" and "flee!"
Strike up clear amid the roar

LXXXVI

Thrice he wrung her hands in twain,
—but they closed and clung
again,—

Toll slowly

Wild she clung, as one, withstood,
clasps a Christ upon the rood,
In a spasm of deathly pain

LXXXVII

She clung wild and she clung mute,—
with her shuddering lips half-
shut,—

Toll slowly

Her head fallen as in swoond,—hair
and knee swept on the ground,—
She clung wild to stirrup and foot

LXXXVIII

Back he reined his steed, back-thrown
on the slippery coping-stone,—

Toll slowly

Back the iron hoofs did grind on the
battlement behind
Whence a hundred feet went down

LXXXIX

And his heel did press and goad on
the quivering flank bestrode,

Toll slowly

"Friends, and brothers! save my
wife!—Pardon, sweet, in change
for life,—
But I ride alone to God!"

xc

Straight as if the Holy Name had up-
breathed her like a flame,—

Toll slowly

She upsprang, she rose upright,—in
his selle she sate in sight,
By her love she overcame

xci

And her head was on his breast, where
she smiled as one at rest,—

Toll slowly

"Ring," she cried, "O vesper-bell, in
the beechwood's old chapelle!
But the passing-bell rings best!"

xcii

They have caught out at the rein,
which Sir Guy threw loose—in
vain,—

Toll slowly

For the horse in stark despair, with
his front hoofs poised in air,
On the last verge rears amain

XCIII

And he hangs, he rocks between—
and his nostrils curdle in,—

Toll slowly

And he shivers head and hoof—and
the flakes of foam fall off,
And his face grows fierce and thin !

XCIV

And a look of human woe, from his
staring eyes did go,—

Toll slowly

And a sharp cry uttered he, in a fore-
told agony
Of the headlong death below,—

xcv

And, " Ring, ring, thou passing-
bell " still she cried, " i' the old
chappelle ! "—

Toll slowly

Then back-toppling, crashing back—
a dead weight flung out to wrack,
Horse and riders overfell

* * *

I

Oh, the little birds sang east, and the
little birds sang west,—

Toll slowly

And I read this ancient Rhyme, in
the churchyard, while the chime
Slowly tolled for one at rest

II

The abeles moved in the sun, and the
river smooth did run,—

Toll slowly

And the ancient Rhyme rang strange,
with its passion and its change,
Here, where all done lay undone

III

And beneath a willow-tree, I a little
grave did see,—

Toll slowly

Where was graved,—" HERE UNDE-
FILED, LIETH MAUD, A THREE-
YEAR CHILD,

EIGHTEEN HUNDRED FORTY-
THREE "

IV

Then, O Spirits—did I say—ye who
rode so fast that day,—

Toll slowly

Did star-wheels and angel-wings,
with their holy winnowings,
Keep beside you all the way ?

v

Though in passion ye would dash,
with a blind and heavy crash,—

Toll slowly

Up against the thick-bossed shield of
God's judgment in the field,—
Though your heart and brain were
rash,—

VI

Now, your will is all unwilling—now,
your pulses are all stilled,—

Toll slowly

Now, ye lie as meek and mild (whereso-
laid) as Maud the child,
Whose small grave was lately filled

VII

Beating heart and burning brow, ye
are very patient now,—

Toll slowly

And the children might be bold to
pluck the kingcups from your
mould
Ere a month had let them grow.

VIII

And you let the goldfinch sing in the
alder near in spring,—

Toll slowly

Let her build her nest and sit all the
three weeks out on it,
Murmuring not at anything

IX

In your patience ye are strong, cold
and heat ye take not wrong —

Toll slowly

When the trumpet of the angel blows
eternity's evangel,
Time will seem to you not long

X

Oh, the little birds sang east, and the
little birds sang west,—

Toll slowly

And I said in underbreath,—All our
life is mixed with death,
And who knoweth which is best ?

XI

Oh, the little birds sang east, and the
little birds sang west,—

Toll slowly

And I smiled to think God's greatness
flowed around our incomplete-
ness,—
Round our restlessness, His rest

THE LADY'S YES

"Yes," I answered you last night,
 "No," this morning, Sir, I say
 Colours seen by candle-light,
 Will not look the same by day
 When the viols played their best,
 Lamps above, and laughs below—
Love me sounded like a jest,
 Fit for *Yes* or fit for *No*

Call me false or call me free—
 Vow, whatever light may shine,
 No man on your face shall see
 Any grief for change on mine

Yet the sin is on us both—
 Time to dance is not to woo—
 Wooer light makes fickle troth,
 Scorn of *me* recoils on *you*

Learn to win a lady's faith
 Nobly, as the thing is high,
 Bravely, as for life and death—
 With a loyal gravity

Lead her from the festive boards,
 Point her to the starry skies,
 Guard her, by your truthful words,
 Pure from courtship's flatteries

By your truth she shall be true—
 Ever true, as wives of yore—
 And her *Yes*, once said to you,
 SHALL be *Yes* for evermore

THE POET AND THE BIRD

A FABLE

I

SAID a people to a poet—"Go out
 from among us straightway!
 While we are thinking earthly
 things, thou singest of divine
 There's a little fair brown nightingale,
 who, sitting in the gateway,
 Makes fitter music to our ear than
 any song of thine!"

II

The poet went out weeping—the
 nightingale ceased chanting,
 "Now, wherefore, O thou nightin-
 gale, is all thy sweetness done?"
 —"I cannot sing my earthly things,
 the heavenly poet wanting,
 Whose highest harmony includes
 the lowest under sun"

III

The poet went out weeping,—and
 died abroad, bereft there—
 The bird flew to his grave and died
 amid a thousand wails,—
 And when I last came by the place, I
 swear the music left there
 Was only of the poet's song, and
 not the nightingale's

THE LOST BOWER

I

IN the pleasant orchard closes,
 "God bless all our gains," say
 we
 But "May God bless all our
 losses,"
 Better suits with our degree —
 Listen, gentle—ay, and simple!
 Listen, children on the knee!

II

Green the land is where my daily
 Steps in jocund childhood
 played—
 Dimpled close with hill and
 valley,
 Dappled very close with shade,
 Summer-snow of apple blossoms run-
 ning up from glade to glade

III

There is one hill I see nearer
 In my vision of the rest,
 And a little wood seems clearer,
 As it climbeth from the west,
 Sideway from the tree-locked valley,
 to the airy upland crest

IV

Small the wood is, green with
 hazels,
 And, completing the ascent,
 Where the wind blows and sun
 dazzles,
 Thrills in leafy tremblement,
 Like a heart that after climbing,
 beateth quickly through con-
 tent

V

Not a step the wood advances
 O'er the open hill-top's bound
 There, in green arrest, the
 branches
 See their image on the ground
 You may walk beneath them smiling,
 glad with sight and glad with
 sound

VI

For you hearken on your right
hand,
How the birds do leap and call
In the greenwood, out of sight
and
Out of reach and fear of all,
And the squirrels crack the filberts
through their cheerful nadrigal

VII

On your left, the sheep are
cropping
The slant grass and daisies pale,
And five apple-trees stand drop-
ping
Separate shadows toward the
vale,
Over which, in choral silence, the
hills look you their "All
hail!"

VIII

Far out, kindled by each other,
Shining hills on hills arise,
Close as brother leans to brother
When they press beneath the
eyes
Of some father praying blessings from
the gifts of paradise

IX

While beyond, above them
mounted,
And above their woods also,
Malvern hills, for mountains
counted
Not unduly, loom a-row—
Keepers of Piers Plowman's visions,
through the sunshine and the
snow¹

X

Yet, in childhood, little prized I
That fair walk and far survey
'Twas a straight walk unadvised
by
The least mischief worth a nay—
Up and down—as dull as grammar on
the eve of holiday

XI

But the wood, all close and
clenching
Bo g h - b o u g h t - a n d - c o t - i n - r o o t —
No more sky (for over-brancking)

¹ The Malvern Hills of Worcestershire are the scene of Langland's visions, and thus present the earliest classic ground of English poetry

At your head than at your foot,—
Oh, the wood drew me within it, by a
glamour past dispute

XII

Few and broken paths showed
through it,
Where the sheep had tried to
run,—
Forced, with snowy wool, to strew
it
Round the thickets, when anon
They, with silly thorn-pricked noses,
bleated back into the sun

XIII

But my childish heart beat
stronger
Than those thickets dare to grow
I could pierce them! I could
longer
Travel on, methought, than so
Sheep for sheep-paths! braver chil-
dren climb and creep where
they would go

XIV

And the poets wander, said I,
Over places all as rude!
Bold Rinaldo's lovely lady
Sate to meet him in a wood—
Rosalinda, like a fountain, laughed
out pure with solitude

XV

And if Chaucer had not travelled
Through a forest by a well,
He had never dreamt nor mar-
velled
At those ladies fair and fell
Who lived smiling without loving, in
their island-citadel

XVI

Thus I thought of the old singers,
And took courage from their
song,
Till my little struggling fingers
Tore asunder gyve and thong
Of the brambles which entrapped me
and the barrier branches
strong

XVII

On a day, such pastime keeping,
With a fawn's heart debonair,
Under-crawling, overleaping
Thorns that prick and boughs
that bear,
I stood suddenly astonished—I was
gladdened unaware

XVIII

From the place I stood in,
floated
Back the covert dim and close,
And the open ground was coated
Carpet-smooth with grass and
moss,
And the blue-bell's purple presence
signed it worthily across.

XIX

Here a linden-tree stood, bright-
ening
All adown its silver rind,
For as some trees draw the light-
ning,
So this tree, unto my mind,
Drew to earth the blessed sunshine
from the sky where it was
shrined

XX

Tall the linden-tree, and near it
An old hawthorn also grew,
And wood-ivy like a spirit
Hovered dimly round the two,
Shaping thence that Bower of beauty
which I sing of thus to you

XXI

'Twas a bower for garden fitter
Than for any woodland wide
Though a fresh and dewy glitter
Struck it through from side to
side
Shaped and shaven was the freshness,
as by garden-cunning phed

XXII

Oh, a lady might have come there,
Hooded fairly like her hawk,
With a book or lute in summer,
And a hope of sweeter talk,—
Listening less to her own music than
for footsteps on the walk

XXIII

But that bower appeared a
marvel
In the wildness of the place!
With such seeming art and
travail,
Finely fixed and fitted was
Leaf to leaf, the dark-green ivy, to the
summit from the base

XXIV

And the ivy, veined and glossy,
Was enwrought with eglantine,
And the wild hop fibred closely,

And the large-leaved columbine,
Arch of door and window mullion, did
right sylvanly entwine

XXV

Rose-trees either side the door
were
Growing lithe and growing tall,
Each one set a summer warder
For the keeping of the hall,—
With a red rose and a white rose,
leaning, nodding at the wall

XXVI

As I entered—mosses hushing
Stole all noises from my foot,
And a green elastic cushion,
Clasped within the linden's root,
Took me in a chair of silence very
rare and absolute

XXVII

All the floor was paved with
glory,—
Greenly, silently inlaid,
Through quick motions made be-
fore me
With fair counterparts in shade
Of the fair serrated ivy-leaves which
slanted overhead

XXVIII

"Is such pavement in a palace?"
So I questioned in my thought
The sun, shining through the
chalice
Of the red rose hung without,
Threw within a red libation, like an
answer to my doubt

XXIX

At the same time, on the linen
Of my childish lap there fell
Two white may-leaves, down-
ward winning
Through the ceiling's miracle,
From a blossom, like an angel out of
sight yet blessing well

XXX

Down to floor and up to ceiling
Quick I turned my childish face,
With an innocent appealing
For the secret of the place,
To the trees, which surely knew it
in partaking of the grace.

XXXI

Where's no foot of human crea-
ture,
How could reach a human hand?

And if this be work of nature,
Why is nature sudden bland,
Breaking off from other wild work ?
It was hard to understand

XXXII

Was she weary of rough-doing,
Of the bramble and the thorn ?
Did she pause in tender rueing,
Here, of all her sylvan scorn ?
Or, in mock of art's deceiving, was
the sudden mildness worn ?

XXXIII

Or could this same bower (I
fancied)
Be the work of Dryad strong,
Who, surviving all that chanced
In the world's old pagan wrong,
Lay hid, feeding in the woodland, on
the last true poet's song ?

XXXIV

Or was this the house of fairies,
Left, because of the rough ways,
Unassailed by Ave Marys
Which the passing pilgrim
prays,
And beyond St Catherine's chiming
on the blessed Sabbath days ?

XXXV

So, young muser, I sate listening
To my fancy's wildest word—
On a sudden, through the glisten-
ing
Leaves around, a little stirred,
Came a sound, a sense of music, which
was rather felt than heard

XXXVI

Softly, finely, it inwound me—
From the world it shut me in,—
Like a fountain, falling round me,
Which with silver waters thin
Clips a little marble Naiad sitting
smilingly within

XXXVII

Whence the music came, who
knoweth ?
I know nothing But indeed
Pan or Faunus never bloweth
So much sweetness from a reed
Which has sucked the milk of waters,
at the oldest riverhead

XXXVIII

Never lark the sun can waken
With such sweetness ! when the
lark,

The high planets overtaking
In the half-*evanished* Dark,
Casts his singing to their singing, like
an arrow to the mark

XXXIX

Never nightingale so singeth—
Oh ! she leans on thorny tree,
And her poet-soul she flingeth
Over pain to victory !
Yet she never sings such music,—or
she sings it not to me

XL

Never blackbirds, never thrushes,
Nor small finches sing as sweet,
When the sun strikes through
the bushes,
To their crimson clinging feet,
And their pretty eyes look sideways
to the summer heavens com-
plete

XLI

If it *were* a bird, it seemed
Most like Chaucer's, which, in
sooth,
He of green and azure dreamed,
While it sate in spirit-ruth
On that bier of a crowned lady sing-
ing nigh her silent mouth

XLII

If it *were* a bird !—ah, sceptic,
Give me "Yea" or give me
"Nay"—
Though my soul were nympho-
leptic,
As I heard that virelay,
You may stoop your pride to pardon,
for my sin is far away

XLIII

I rose up in exaltation
And an inward trembling heat,
And (it seemed) in geste of pas-
sion
Dropped the music to my feet,
Like a garment rustling downwards !
—such a silence followed it

XLIV

Heart and head beat through the
quiet
Full and heavily, though slower
In the song, I think, and by it,
Mystic Presences of power
Had up-snatched me to the Timeless,
then returned me to the Hour

XLV

In a child-abstraction lifted,
 Straightway from the bower I
 past,
 Foot and soul being dimly drifted
 Through the greenwood, till, at
 last,
 In the hill-top's open sunshine I all
 consciously was cast

XLVI

Face to face with the true moun-
 tains,
 I stood silently and still,
 Drawing strength from fancy's
 dauntings,
 From the air about the hill,
 And from Nature's open mercies, and
 most debonair goodwill

XLVII

Oh! the golden-hearted daisies
 Witnessed there, before my
 youth,
 To the truth of things, with
 praises
 Of the beauty of the truth,
 And I woke to Nature's real, laughing
 joyfully for both

XLVIII

And I said within me laughing,
 I have found a bower to-day
 A green lusus—fashioned half in
 Chance, and half in Nature's
 play—
 And a little bird sings nigh it, I will
 nevermore missay

XLIX

Henceforth, I will be the fairy
 Of this bower, not built by one,
 I will go there, sad or merry
 With each morning's benison,
 And the bird shall be my harper in the
 dream-hall I have won

L

So I said But the next morning,
 (—Child, look up into my face—
 'Ware, oh sceptic, of your scorn-
 ing!
 This is truth in its pure grace,)
 The next morning, all had vanished,
 or my wandering missed the
 place

LI

Bring an oath most sylvan holy,
 And upon it swear me true—

By the wind-bells swingings slowly
 Their mute curfews in the dew—
 By the advent of the snowdrop—by
 the rosemary and rue,—

LII

I affirm by all or any,
 Let the cause be charm or chance,
 That my wandering searches
 many
 Missed the bower of my ro-
 mance—
 That I nevermore, upon it, turned
 my mortal countenance

LIII

I affirm that, since I lost it,
 Never bower has seemed so fair—
 Never garden-creeper crossed it,
 With so deft and brave an air—
 Never bird sung in the summer, as I
 saw and heard them there

LIV

Day by day, with new desire,
 Toward my wood I ran in faith—
 Under leaf and over brier—
 Through the thickets, out of
 breath—
 Like the prince who rescued Beauty
 from the sleep as long as death

LV

But his sword of mettle clashed,
 And his arm smote strong, I
 ween,
 And her dreaming spirit flashed
 Through her body's fair white
 screen,—
 And the light thereof might guide him
 up the cedar alleys green

LVI

But for me, I saw no splendour—
 All my sword was my child-
 heart,
 And the wood refused surrender
 Of that bower it held apart,
 Safe as Oedipus's grave-place, mid
 Colone's olives swart

LVII

As Aladdin sought the basements
 His fair palace rose upon,
 And the four-and-twenty case-
 ments
 Which gave answers to the sun,
 So, in wilderment of gazing, I looked
 up, and I looked down

LVIII

Years have vanished since, as
wholly
As the little bower did then,
And you call it tender folly
That such thoughts should come
again?

Ah! I cannot change this sighing for
your smiling, brother-men!

LIX

For this loss it did prefigure
Other loss of better good,
When my soul, in spirit-vigour,
And in ripened womanhood,
Fell from visions of more beauty than
an arbour in a wood

LX

I have lost—oh, many a pleasure—
Many a hope, and many a power—
Studious health and merry
leisure—
The first dew on the first flower!
But the first of all my losses was the
losing of the bower

LXI

I have lost the dream of Doing,
And the other dream of Done—
The first spring in the pursuing,
The first pride in the Begun,—
First recoil from incompleteness, in the
face of what is won,—

LXII

Exaltations in the far light
Where some cottage only is—
Mild dejections in the starlight,
Which the sadder-hearted miss,
And the child-cheek blushing scarlet
for the very shame of bliss

LXIII

I have lost the sound child-sleep-
ing
Which the thunder could not
break,
Something too of the strong
leaping
Of the staglike heart awake,
Which the pale is low for keeping in
the road it ought to take

LXIV

Some respect to social fictions
Has been also lost by me,
And some generous genuflections,
Which my spirit offered free

To the pleasant old conventions of
our false humanity

LXV

All my losses did I tell you,
Ye, perchance, would look
away,—

Ye would answer me, "Farewell!
you

Make sad company to-day,
And your tears are falling faster than
the bitter words you say"

LXVI

For God placed me like a dial
In the open ground with power,
And my heart had for its trial,
All the sun and all the shower!
And I suffered many losses, and my
first was of the bower

LXVII

Laugh you? If that loss of
mine be
Of no heavy-seeming weight—
When the cone falls from the
pine-tree,
The young children laugh thereat,
Yet the wind that struck it riseth,
and the tempest shall be great

LXVIII

One who knew me in my child-
hood
In the glamour and the game,
Looking on me long and mild,
would
Never know me for the same
Come, unchanging recollections, where
those changes overcame

LXIX

On this couch I weakly lie on,
While I count my memories,—
Through the fingers which, still
sighing,
I press closely on mine eyes,—
Clear as once beneath the sunshine, I
behold the bower arise

LXX

Springs the linden-tree as greenly,
Stroked with light adown its
rind—
And the ivy leaves serenely
Each in either intertwined,
And the rose-trees at the doorway,
they have neither grown nor
pined

LXXI

From those overblown faint
roses,
Not a leaf appeareth shed,
And that little bud discloses
Not a thorn's-breadth more of
red,
For the winters and the summers
which have passed me over-
head

LXXII

And that music overfloweth,
Sudden sweet, the sylvan eaves,
Thrush or nightingale—who
knoweth?
Fay or Faunus—who believes?
But my heart still trembles in me, to
the trembling of the leaves

LXXIII

Is the bower lost, then? Who
sayeth
That the bower indeed is lost?
Hark! my spirit in it prayeth
Through the sunshine and the
frost,—
And the prayer preserves it greenly,
to the last and uttermost—

LXXIV

Till another open for me
In God's Eden-land unknown,
With an angel at the doorway,
White with gazing at His
throne,
And a saint's voice in the palm-trees,
singing—"ALL IS LOST and
won!"

A CHILD ASLEEP

I

How he sleepeth! having
drunken
Weary childhood's mandra-
gore!
From its pretty eyes have
sunken
Pleasures, to make room for
more—
Sleeping near the wither'd nosegay,
which he pulled the day
before

II

Nosegays! leave them for the
waking

Throw them earthward where
they grew
Dim are such, beside the break-
ing
Amaranths he looks unto—
Folded eyes see brighter colours than
the open ever do

III

Heaven-flowers rayed by sha-
dows golden
From the paths they sprang
beneath,
Now perhaps divinely holden,
Swing against him in a wreath—
We may think so from the quickening
of his bloom and of his
breath

IV

Vision unto vision calleth,
While the young child dream-
eth on
Fair O dreamer thee befalleth
With the glory thou hast won!
Darker wert thou in the garden yes-
termorn by summer sun

V

We should see the spirits ringing
Round thee,—were the clouds
away
'Tis the child heart draws them,
singing
In the silent-seeming clay—
Singing!—Stars that seem the mut-
est, go in music all the way

VI

As the moths around a taper,
As the bees around a rose,
As the gnats around a vapour,—
So the spirits ground and close
Round about a holy child, as if
drinking its repose

VII

Shapes of brightness overlean
thee,—
Flash their diadems of youth
On the ringlets which half screen
thee,—
While thou smilest, not
in sooth
Thy smile but the overfair one,
dropt from some ethereal
mouth

VIII

Haply it is angels' duty,
 During slumber, shade by
 shade
 To fine down this childish beauty
 To the thing it must be made,
 Ere the world shall bring it praises or
 the tomb shall see it fade

IX

Softly softly ! make no noises !
 Now he lieth dead and dumb—
 Now he hears the angels' voices
 Folding silence in the room—
 Now he muses deep the meaning of
 the Heaven-words as they
 come

X

Speak not ! he is consecrated—
 Breathe no breath across his
 eyes
 Lifted up and separated,
 On the hand of God he lies,
 In a sweetness beyond touching,—
 held in cloistral sanctities

XI

Could ye bless him—father—
 mother ?
 Bless the dimple in his cheek ?
 Dare ye look at one another
 And the benediction speak ?
 Would ye not break out in weeping
 and confess yourselves too
 weak ?

XII

He is harmless—ye are sinful,—
 Ye are troubled—he, at ease
 From his slumber, virtue winful
 Floweth outward with in-
 crease !
 Dare not bless him ! but be blessed by
 his peace—and go in peace

CROWNED AND WEDDED

I

WHEN last before her people's face
 her own fair face she bent,
 Within the meek projection of that
 shade she was content
 To erase the child-smile from her lips,
 which seemed as if it might
 Be still kept holy from the world to
 childhood still in sight—
 To erase it with a solemn vow,—a
 princely vow—to rule—

B P

A priestly vow—to rule by grace of
 God the pitiful,—
 A very godlike vow—to rule in right
 and righteousness,
 And with the law and for the land !—
 so God the vower bless !

II

The minster was alight that day, but
 not with fire, I ween,
 And long-drawn glitterings swept
 adown that mighty aisled scene.
 The priests stood stoled in their pomp,
 the sworded chiefs in theirs,
 And so, the collared knights,—and so,
 the civil Ministers —
 And so, the waiting lords and dames
 —and little pages best
 At holding trains—and legates so,
 from countries East and West—
 So, alien princes native peers, and
 high-born ladies bright,
 Along whose brows the Queen's, new
 crowned, flashed coronets to
 light —
 And so, the people at the gates, with
 priestly hands on high,
 Which bring the first anointing to all
 legal majesty
 And so the DEAD—who lie in rows
 beneath the minster floor
 There, verily an awful state maintain-
 ing evermore—
 The statesman whose clean palm will
 kiss no bribe whate'er it be,
 The courtier who, for no fair queen,
 will rise up to his knee,
 The court-dame who, for no court-
 tire, will leave her shroud be-
 hind,
 The laureate who no courtlier rhyme
 than "dust to dust" can find—
 The kings and queens who having
 made that vow and worn that
 crown,
 Descended unto lower thrones and
 darker, deep adown !
Dieu et mon droit—what is't to them ?
 —what meaning can it have ?—
 The King of kings, the rights of death
 —God's judgment and the grave !
 And when betwixt the quick and dead
 the young fair Queen had vowed,
 The living shouted "May she live !
 Victoria, live !" aloud—
 And as the loyal shouts went up, true
 spirits prayed between,

R

"The blessings happy monarchs have,
be thine, O crown'd Queen!"

III

But now before her people's face she
bendeth hers anew
And calls them, while she vows, to be
her witness thereunto
She vowed to rule and, in that oath,
her childhood put away—
She doth maintain her womanhood,
in vowing love to-day
O lovely lady!—let her vow!—such
lips become such vows,
And fairer goeth bridal wreath than
crown with vernal brows
O lovely lady!—let her vow!—yea,
let her vow to love!—
And though she be no less a queen—
with purples hung above,
The pageant of a Court behind, the
royal kin around,
And woven gold to catch her looks
turned maidenly to ground,
Yet may the bride-veil hide from her
a little of that state
While loving hopes, for retinues,
about her sweetness wait
SHE vows to love who vowed to rule
—the chosen at her side,
Let none say, "God preserve the
Queen!"—but rather, "Bless the
bride!"
None blow the trump none bend the
knee none violate the dream
Wherein no monarch but a wife, she
to herself may seem
Or if ye say, "Preserve the Queen!"
—oh breathe it inward low—
She is a woman and beloved!—and
'tis enough but so
Count it enough thou noble Prince,
who tak'st her by the hand,
And claimest for thy lady-love, our
lady of the land!
And since, Prince Albert, men have
called thy spirit high and rare
And true to truth and brave for
truth as some at Augsburg
were,—
We charge thee by thy lofty thoughts,
and by thy poet-mind
Which not by glory and degree takes
measure of mankind,
Esteem that wedded hand less dear
for sceptre than for ring

And hold her uncrowned womanhood
to be the royal thing

IV

And now, upon our Queen's last vow,
what blessings shall we pray?
None, straitened to a shallow crown,
will suit our lips to-day
Behold, they must be free as love—
they must be broad as free
Even to the borders of heaven's light
and earth's humanity
Long live she!—send up loyal shouts
—and true hearts pray between,—
"The blessings happy PEASANTS
have, be thine, O crowned
Queen!"

CROWNED AND BURIED

I

NAPOLEON!—years ago, and that
great word
Compact of human breath in hate and
dread
And exultation, skied us overhead—
An atmosphere whose lightning was
the sword
Scathing the cedars of the world,—
drawn down
In burnings, by the metal of a crown

II

Napoleon! Nations, while they cursed
that name,
Shook at their own curse, and while
others bore
Its sound, as of a trumpet, on before,
Brass-fronted legions justified its
fame—
And dying men, on trampled battle-
sods
Near their last silence, uttered it for
God's

III

Napoleon! Sages, with high fore-
heads drooped,
Did use it for a problem children
small
Leapt up to greet it, as at manhood's
call
Priests blessed it from their altars
overstooped
By meek-eyed Christs,—and widows
with a moan
Spake it when questioned why they
sate alone

IV

That name consumed the silence of
the snows
In Alpine keeping, holy and cloud-
hid,
The mimic eagles dared what Nature's
did,
And over-rushed her mountainous
repose
In search of eyries and the Egyp-
tian river
Mingled the same word with its grand
"For ever"

V

That name was shouted near the
pyramidal
Nilotic tombs, whose mummied habi-
tants,
Packed to humanity's significance,
Motioned it back with stillness
Shouts as idle
As hireling artists' work of myrrh and
spice
Which swathed last glories round the
Ptolemies

VI

The world's face changed to hear it
Kingly men
Came down, in chidden babes' bewil-
derment,
From autocratic places—each con-
tent
With sprinkled ashes for anointing,
—then
The people laughed or wondered for
the nonce
To see one throne a composite of
thrones

VII

Napoleon! even the torrid vastitude
Of India felt in throbbings of the air
That name which scattered by disas-
trous blare
All Europe's bound-lines,—drawn
afresh in blood
Napoleon—from the Russias, west
to Spain!
And Austria trembled—till ye heard
her chain

VIII

And Germany was 'ware—and Italy
Oblivious of old fames—her laurel-
locked,
High-ghosted Cæsars passing unin-
voked,—

Did crumble her own ruins with her
knee,
To serve a newer—Ay! but French-
men cast
A future from them nobler than her
past

IX

For, verily, though France augustly
rose
With that raised NAME, and did
assume by such
The purple of the world,—none gave
so much
As she, in purchase—to speak plain,
in loss—
Whose hands, to freedom stretched,
dropped paralysed
To wield a sword or fit an undersized

X

King's crown to a great man's head.
And though along
Her Paris' streets did float on fre-
quent streams
Of triumph, pictured or emmarbled
dreams,
Dreamt right by genius in a world
gone wrong,—
No dream, of all so won, was fair to
see
As the lost vision of her liberty.

XI

Napoleon! 'twas a high name lifted
high!
It met at last God's thunder sent to
clear
Our compassing and covering atmo-
sphere
And open a clear sight beyond the
sky,
Of supreme empire, this of earth's
was done—
And kings crept out again to feel the
sun

XII

The kings crept out—the peoples sate
at home,—
And finding the long-invoked peace
A pall embroidered with worn images
Of rights divine, too scant to cover
doom
Such as they suffered,—cursed the
corn that grew
Rankly, to bitter bread, on Waterloo

XIII

A deep gloom centred in the deep
repose—

The nations stood up mute to count
their dead—

And *he* who owned the NAME which
vibrated

Through silence,—trusting to his
noblest foes

When earth was all too grey for
chivalry,

Died of their mercies, 'mid the desert
sea

xiv

O wild St Helen ! very still she kept
him

With a green willow for all pyramid —
Which stirred a little if the low wind
did,

A little more, if pilgrims overwept
him

Disparting the lithe boughs to see the
clay

Which seemed to cover his for judg-
ment-day

xv

Nay ! not so long !—France kept her
old affection

As deeply as the sepulchre the corse,
Until dilated by such love's remorse

To a new angel of the resurrection,
She cried, " Behold, thou England ! I
would have

The dead whereof thou wottest, from
that grave "

xvi

And England answered in the cour-
tesy

Which ancient foes turned lovers,
may befit,—

" Take back thy dead ! and when
thou buriest it,

Throw in all former strifes 'twixt thee
and me "

Amen, mine England ! 'tis a courteous
claim—

But ask a little room too for
thy shame !

xvii

Because it was not well, it was not
well

Nor tuneless with thy lofty-chanted
part

Among the Oceanides,—that Heart

To bind and bare and vex with vul-
ture fell

I would, my noble England ! men
might seek

All crimson stains upon thy breast—
not cheek !

xviii

I would that hostile fleets had scarred
this bay,¹

Instead of the lone ship which waited
moored

Until thy princely purpose was as-
sured,

Then left a *shadow*—not to pass
away—

Not for to-night's moon, nor to
morrow's sun !

Green watching hills, ye witnessed
what was done !

xix

But since it *was* done,—in sepulchral
dust,

We fain would pay back something of
our debt

To France, if not to honour, and for-
get

How through much fear we falsified
the trust

Of a fallen foe and exile —We return
Orestes to Electra in his urn

xx

A little urn—a little dust inside,
Which once outbalanced the large
earth albeit

To-day a four-years child might carry
it

Sleek-browed and smiling " Let the
burden 'bide ! "

Orestes to Electra !—O fair town
Of Paris, how the wild tears will run
down

xxi

And run back in the chariot-marks of
Time,

When all the people shall come forth
to meet

The passive victor, death-sull in the
street

He rode through 'mid the shouting
and bell-chime

And martial music,—under eagles
which

Dyed their rapacious beaks at Auster-
litz

¹ Written at Torquay

XXII

Napoleon! he hath come again—
borne home
Upon the popular ebbing heart,—a
sea
Which gathers its own wrecks per-
petually,
Majestically moaning Give him
room!—
Room for the dead in Paris! welcome
solemn
And grave-deep, 'neath the cannon-
moulded column!¹

XXIII

There, weapon spent and warrior
spent may rest
From roar of fields, provided Jupiter
Dare trust Saturnus to lie down so
near
His bolts!—And this he *may* For,
dispossessed
Of any godship lies the godlike aim—
The goat, Jove sucked, as likely to do
harm

XXIV

And yet Napoleon!—the recov-
ered name
Shakes the old casements of the
world! and we
Look out upon the passing pageantry,
Attesting that the Dead makes good
his claim
To a French grave,—another kingdom
won—
The last—of few spans—by Napoleon

XXV

Blood fell like dew beneath his sun-
rise—sooth!
But glittered dew-like in the cove-
nanted
Meridian light He was a despot—
granted!
But the *avtors* of his autocratic mouth
Said yea! the people's French he
magnified
The image of the freedom he denied

XXVI

And if they asked for rights, he made
reply,
"Ye have my glory!"—and so,
drawing round them
His ample purple, glorified and bound
them

¹ It was the first intention to bury him under
the column

In an embrace that seemed identity
He ruled them like a tyrant—true!
but none
Were ruled like slaves each felt
Napoleon

XXVII

I do not praise this man the man
was flawed,
For Adam—much more, Christ!—
his knee, unbent—
His hand, unclean—his aspiration,
pent
Within a sword-sweep—pshaw!—but
since he had
The gemus to be loved, why let him
have
The justice to be honoured in his
grave

XXVIII

I think this nation steers thus poured
together,
Nobler than shouts, I think this
funeral
Grander than crownings, though a
Pope bless all,
I think this grave stronger than
thrones But whether
The crowned Napoleon or the buried
clay
Be better, I discern not—Angels may

TO FLUSH, MY DOG

I

LOVING friend, the gift of one
Who her own true faith hath run,
Through thy lower nature,²
Be my benediction said
With my hand upon thy head,
Gentle fellow-creature!

II

Like a lady's ringlets brown,
Flow thy silken ears adown
Either side demurely
Of thy silver-suited breast,
Shining out from all the rest
Of thy body purely

² This dog was the gift of my dear and admired
friend Miss Mitford, and belongs to the beautiful
race she has rendered celebrated among English
and American readers. The Flushes have their
laurels as well as the Caesars,—the chief differ-
ence (at least the very head and front of it) con-
sisting, perhaps, in the bald head of the latter
under the crown

III

Darkly brown thy body is,
Till the sunshine striking this
Alchemise its dulness,
When the sleek curls manifold
Flash all over into gold,
With a burnished fulness

IV

Underneath my stroking hand,
Startled eyes of hazel bland
Kindling, growing larger,
Up thou leapest with a spring,
Full of prank and curveting,
Leaping like a charger

V

Leap ! thy broad tail waves a light,
Leap ! thy slender feet are bright,
Canopied in fringes
Leap—those tasselled ears of thine
Flicker strangely, fair and fine,
Down their golden inches

VI

Yet, my pretty, sportive friend,
Little is't to such an end
That I praise thy rareness !
Other dogs may be thy peers
Haply in these drooping ears,
And this glossy fairness

VII

But of *thee* it shall be said,
This dog watched beside a bed
Day and night unwearied,—
Watched within a curtained room,
Where no sunbeam brake the gloom
Round the sick and dreary

VIII

Roses, gathered for a vase,
In that chamber died apace,
Beam and breeze resigning—
This dog only, waited on,
Knowing that when light is gone,
Love remains for shining

IX

Other dogs in thymy dew
Tracked the hares and followed
through
Sunny moor or meadow—
This dog only, crept and crept
Next a languid cheek that slept,
Sharing in the shadow

X

Other dogs of loyal cheer
Bounded at the whistle clear,
Up the woodside hieing—

This dog only, watched in reach
Of a faintly uttered speech,
Or a louder sighing

XI

And if one or two quick tears
Dropped upon his glossy ears,
Or a sigh came double,—
Up he sprang in eager haste,
Fawning, fondling, breathing fast,
In a tender trouble

XII

And this dog was satisfied
If a pale thin hand would glide
Down his dewlaps sloping,—
Which he pushed his nose within,
After,—platforming his chin
On the palm left open

XIII

This dog, if a friendly voice
Call him now to blyther choice
Than such chamber-keeping,
“Come out !” praying from the
door,—
Presseth backward as before,
Up against me leaping

XIV

Therefore to this dog will I,
Tenderly not scornfully,
Render praise and favour
With my hand upon his head,
Is my benediction said
Therefore, and for ever

XV

And because he loves me so,
Better than his kind will do
Often, man or woman,—
Give I back more love again
Than dogs often take of men,—
Leaning from my Human

XVI

Blessings on thee, dog of mine,
Pretty collars make thee fine
Sugared milk make fat thee !
Pleasures wag on in thy tail—
Hands of gentle motion fail
Nevermore, to pat thee !

XVII

Downy pillow take thy head,
Silken coverlid bestead,
Sunshine help thy sleeping !
No fly's buzzing wake thee up—
No man break thy purple cup,
Set for drinking deep in

XVIII

Whiskered cats arointed flee,
 Sturdy stoppers keep from thee
 Cologne distillations,
 Nuts lie in thy path for stones,
 And thy feast-day macaroons
 Turn to daily rations !

XIX

Mock I thee, in wishing weal ?—
 Tears are in my eyes to feel
 Thou art made so straightly,
 Blessing needs must straighten too,—
 Little canst thou joy or do,
 Thou who lovest *greatly*

XX

Yet be blessed to the height
 Of all good and all delight
 Pervious to thy nature,
 Only *loved* beyond that line,
 With a love that answers thine,
 Loving fellow-creature !

THE FOURFOLD ASPECT

I

WHEN ye stood up in the house
 With your little childish feet
 And, in touching Life's first shows,
 First the touch of Love did
 -meet,—

Love and Nearness seeming one,
 By the heartlight cast before,
 And, of all Beloveds, none
 Standing farther than the
 door—

Not a name being dear to
 thought,

With its owner beyond call,—
 Nor a face, unless it brought
 Its own shadow to the wall,—
 When the worst recorded change
 Was of apple dropt from
 bough,—

When love's sorrow seemed more
 strange

Than love's treason can seem
 now,—

Then, the Loving took you up
 Soft, upon their elder knees,—
 Telling why the statues droop
 Underneath the churchyard
 trees,

And how ye must lie beneath
 them,

Through the winters long and
 deep,

Till the last trump overbreathe
 them,

And ye smile out of your
 sleep

Oh ! ye lifted up your head, and it
 seemed as if they said

A tale of fairy ships

With a swan-wing for a
 sail—

Oh ! ye kissed their loving
 lips

For the merry, merry
 tale !—

So carelessly ye thought upon the
 Dead

II

Soon ye read in solemn stories

Of the men of long ago—

Of the pale bewildering glories

Shining farther than we know,—

Of the heroes with the laurel,

Of the poets with the bay,

Of the two worlds' earnest quarrel

For that beauteous Helena,—

How Achilles at the portal

Of the tent, heard footsteps
 nigh,

And his strong heart, half-im-
 mortal,

Met the *Kenta* with a cry,—

How Ulysses left the sunlight

For the pale eidola race

Blank and passive through the
 dun light,

Staring blindly on his face

How that true wife said to
 Pætus,

With calm smile and wounded
 heart,—

"Sweet, it hurts not !" how
 Admetus

Saw his blessed one depart

How King Arthur proved his
 mission,—

And Sir Roland wound his
 horn,—

And at Sangreal's moony vision
 Swords did bristle round like
 corn

Oh ! ye lifted up your head, and it
 seemed the while ye read,

That this death, then, must
 be found

A Valhalla for the crowned,
 The heroic who prevail

None, be sure, can enter in
Far below a paladin
Of a noble, noble tale !—
So awfully ye thought upon the
Dead

III

Ay, but soon ye woke up shrieking,—
As a child that wakes at night
From a dream of sisters speaking
In a garden's summer-light,—
That wakes, starting up and
bounding,
In a lonely, lonely bed,
With a wall of darkness round
him,
Stifling black about his head !—
And the full sense of your mortal
Rushed upon you deep and
loud,
And ye heard the thunder hurtle
From the silence of the cloud !
Funeral-torches at your gateway
Threw a dreadful light within,
All things changed ! you rose up
straightway,
And saluted Death and Sin
Since,—your outward man has
rallied,
And your eye and voice grown
bold—
Yet the Sphinx of Life stands
pallid,
With her saddest secret told
Happy places have grown holy,
If ye went where once ye went,
Only tears would fall down
slowly,
As at solemn sacrament
Merry books, once read for pas-
time,
If ye dared to read again,
Only memories of the last time
Would swim darkly up the
brain
Household names, which used
to flutter
Through your laughter un-
awares,—
God's Divine name ye could
utter
With less trembling in your
prayers !
Ye have dropt adown your head, and
it seems as if ye tread

On your own hearts in the
path
Ye are called to in His
wrath,—
And your prayers go up in
wail !
—" Dost Thou see, taen,
all our loss,
O Thou agonised on cross ?
Art Thou reading all its
tale ? "

So mournfully ye think upon the
Dead

IV

Pray, pray, thou who also weep-
est
And the drops will slacken so,—
Weep, weep,—and the watch
thou keepest,

With a quicker count will go
Think —the shadow on the dial
For the nature most undone,
Marks the passing of the trial,
Proves the presence of the sun
Look, look up, in starry passion,
To the throne above the
spheres,—

Learn, the spirit's gravitation
Still must differ from the tear's
Hope, with all the strength thou
usest

In embracing thy despair
Love, the earthly love thou lovest
Shall return to thee more fair
Work, make clear the forest-
tangles

Of the wildest stranger-land
Trust the blessed deathly an-
gels

Whisper, " Sabbath hours at
hand ! "

By the heart's wound when most
gory

By the longest agony
Smile !—Behold, in sudden glory

The TRANSFIGURED smiles on
thee !

And ye lifted up your head, and it
seemed as if He said,

" My Beloved, is it so ?

Have ye tasted of My woe?—

Of My Heaven ye shall not
fail ! "

He stands brightly where
the shade is,

With the keys of Death and
Hades,
And there, ends the mourn-
ful tale —
So hopefully ye think upon the
Dead

A FLOWER IN A LETTER

I

My lonely chamber next the sea,
Is full of many flowers set free
By summer's earliest duty,
Dear friends upon the garden-walk
Might stop amid their fondest talk,
To pull the least in beauty

II

A thousand flowers—each seeming
one

That learnt by gazing on the sun
To counterfeit his shining—
Within whose leaves the holy dew
That falls from heaven, hath won
anew

A glory in declining

III

Red roses, used to praises long,
Contented with the poet's song,
Their ~~zbt-r~~'s being over,
And ~~-~~' repared to touch
The whitest thought nor soil it much,
Of dreamer turned to lover

IV

Deep violets you liken to
The kindest eyes that look on you,
Without a thought disloyal,
And cactuses, a queen might don
If weary of a golden crown,
And still appear as royal

V

Pansies for ladies all 'I wis
That none who wear such brooches,
miss

A jewel in the mirror,
And tulips, children love to stretch
Their fingers down, to feel in each
Its beauty's secret nearer

VI

Love's language may be talked with
these

To work out choicest sentences,
No blossoms can be meeter,—
And, such being used in Eastern
bowers,

Young maids may wonder if the
flowers
Or meanings be the sweeter

VII

And such being strewn before a bride,
Her little foot may turn aside,
Their longer bloom decreeing,—
Unless some voice's whispered sound
Should make her gaze upon the
ground
Too earnestly—for seeing

VIII

And such being scattered on a grave,
Whoever mourneth there, may have
A type that seemeth worthy
Of a fair body hid below,
Which bloomed on earth a time ago,
Then perished as the earthy

IX

And such being wreathed for worldly
feast,
Across the brimming cup some guest
Their rainbow colours viewing,
May feel them,—with a silent start,—
The covenant, his childish heart
With nature made,—renewing

X

No flowers our gardened England
hath,
To match with these in bloom and
breath,

Which from the world are hiding
In sunny Devon moist with rills,—
A nunnery of cloistered hills,
The elements presiding

XI

By Loddon's streams the flowers are
fair,

That meet one gifted lady's care
With prodigal rewarding,
For Beauty is too used to run
To Mitford's bower—to want the
sun

To light her through the garden

XII

But here, all summers are comprised—
The nightly frosts shrink exorcised
Before the priestly moonshine,
And every Wind with stoled feet
In wandering down the alleys sweet
Steps lightly on the sunshine,

XIII

And (having promised Harpocrate
Among the nodding roses that

No harm shall touch his daughters)
Gives quite away the rushing sound
He dares not use upon such ground,
To ever-trickling waters

XIV

Yet, sun and wind ! what can ye do,
But make the leaves more brightly
show

In posies newly gathered ?—
I look away from all your best,
To one poor flower unlike the rest,—
A little flower half-withered

XV

I do not think it ever was
A pretty flower—to make the grass
Look greener where it reddened,
And now it seems ashamed to be
Alone, in all this company,
Of aspect shrunk and saddened

XVI

A chamber-window was the spot
It grew in, from a garden-pot,
Among the city shadows
If any, tending it, might seem
To smile, 'twas only in a dream
Of nature in the meadows

XVII

How coldly on its head did fall
The sunshine from the city wall
In pale refraction driven !
How sadly, plashed upon its leaves
The raindrops, losing in the eaves
The first sweet news of Heaven !

XVIII

And those who planted, gathered it
In gamesome or in loving fit,
And sent it as a token
Of what their city pleasures be,—
For one in Devon by the sea
And garden-blooms, to look on

XIX

But SHE, for whom the jest was
meant,
With a grave passion innocent
Receiving what was given—
Oh ! if her face she turned then
Let none say 'twas to gaze again
Upon the flowers of Devon !

XX

Because whatever virtue dwells
In genial skies—warm oracles
For gardens brightly springing—
The flowers which grew beneath your
eyes,

Beloved friends, to mine supplies
A beauty worthier singing !

THE MASK

I

I HAVE a smiling face she said,
I have a jest for all I meet,
I have a garland for my head
And all its flowers are sweet,—
And so you call me gay, she said

II

Grief taught to me this smile, she said,
And Wrong did teach this jesting
bold,
These flowers were plucked from
garden-bed
While a death-chime was tolled—
And what now will you say ?—she
said

III

Behind no prison-grate, she said,
Which slurs the sunshine half a
mile,
Are captives so uncomforted,
As souls behind a smile
God's pity let us pray, she said

IV

I know my face is bright she said,—
Such brightness, dying suns dif-
fuse !
I bear upon my forehead shed
The sign of what I lose,—
The ending of my day, she said

V

If I dared leave this smile she said,
And take a moan upon my mouth,
And tie a cypress round my head,
And let my tears run smooth—
It were the happier way she said

VI

And since that must not be she said,
I fain your bitter world would leave
How calmly, calmly smile the Dead,
Who do not, therefore, grieve !
The yea of Heaven is yea, she said

VII

But in your bitter world, she said,
Face-joy's a costly mask to wear,
And bought with pangs long nour-
ished,
And rounded to despair
Grief's earnest makes life's play, she
said

VIII

Ye weep for those who weep ?—
she said—

Ah fools !—I bid you pass them by !
Go, weep for those whose hearts
have bled,

What time their eyes were dry !
Whom sadder can I say ?—she said

CALLS ON THE HEART

I

FREE HEART, that singest to-day,
Like a bird on the first green spray,
Wilt thou go forth to the world,
Where the hawk hath his wing
unfurled

To follow, perhaps, thy way ?
Where the tamer, thine own will
bind,

And, to make thee sing, will blind,
While the little hip grows for the
free behind ?

Heart, wilt thou go ?

—" No, no !

Free hearts are better so "

II

The world, thou hast heard it told,
Has counted its robber-gold,
And the pieces stick to the hand
The world goes riding it fair and
grand

While the truth is bought and
sold !

World-voices East, world-voices
West,

They call thee, Heart, from thine
early rest,

" Come hither, come hither and be
our guest "

Heart, wilt thou go ?

—" No no !

Good hearts are calmer so "

III

Who calleth thee, Heart ? World's
Strife,

With a golden heft to his knife
World's Mirth, with a finger fine

That draws on a board in wine
Her blood-red plans of life

World's Gain, with a brow knit
down

World's Fame, with a laurel crown,
Which rustles most as the leaves turn
brown—

Heart, wilt thou go ?

—" No, no !

Calm hearts are wiser so "

IV

Hast heard that Proserpina
(Once fooling) was snatched away,
To partake the dark king's seat,—
And that the tears ran fast on her
feet

To think how the sun shone
yesterday ?

With her ankles sunken in asphodel
She wept for the roses of earth
which fell

From her lap when the wild car drave
to hell

Heart, wilt thou go ?

—" No, n' !

Wise hearts are warmer so "

V

And what is this place not seen,
Where Hearts may hide serene ?

" 'Tis a fair still house well kept,
Which humble thoughts have swept,

And holy prayers made clean
There, I sit with Love in the sun,

And we two never have done
Singing sweeter songs than are
guessed by one "

Heart, wilt thou go ?

—" No, no !

Warm hearts are fuller so "

VI

O Heart O Love,—I fear

That Love may be kept too near

Hast heard, O Heart, that tale,

How Love may be false and frail

To a heart once holden dear ?

—" But this true Love of mine

Clings fast as the clinging vine,

And mingles pure as the grapes in
wine "

Heart, wilt thou go ?

—" No, no !

Full hearts beat higher so "

VII

O Heart, O Love, beware !—

Look up, and boast not there

For who has twirled at the pin ?

'Tis the world, between Death and
Sin,—

The world, and the world's Des-
pair !

And Death has quickened his pace

To the hearth with a mocking face,
Familiar as Love, in Love's own
place—

Heart, wilt thou go ?

" Still no !

High hearts must grieve even so "

VIII

The house is waste to-day,—
The leaf has dropt from the spray
The thorn, prickt through to the
song

If summer doeth no wrong

The winter will, they say

Sing Heart ! what Heart replies ?

In vain we were calm and wise,

I, the tears unknissed stand on in our
eyes

Heart, wilt thou go ?

—" Ah, no !

Grieved hearts must break even
so "

IX

Howbeit all is not lost

The warm noon ends in frost,

And worldly tongues of promise,

Like sheep-bells die off from us

On the desert hills cloud-crossed !

Yet through the silence, shall

Pierce the death-angel's call,

And " Come up hither," recover all

Heart, wilt thou go ?

—" I go !

Broken hearts triumph so "

WISDOM UNAPPLIED

I

If I were thou, O butterfly,
And poised my purple wings to spy
The sweetest flowers that live and
die,—

II

I would not waste my strength on
those,

As thou,—for summer hath a close
And pansies bloom not in the snows

III

If I were thou, O working bee,
And all that honey-gold I see
Could delve from roses easily,

IV

I would not live it at man's door,
As thou,—that heirdom of my store
Should make him rich, and leave me
poor

V

If I were thou, O eagle proud,
And screamed the thunder back aloud,
And faced the lightning from the
cloud,

VI

I would not build my eyrie-throne,
As thou,—upon a crumbling sto e
Which the next storm may trample
down

VII

If I were thou O gallant steed,
With pawing hoof, and dancing head,
And eye outrunning thine own speed,

VIII

I would not meeken to the rein,
As thou—nor smooth my nostril
plain
From the glad desert's snort and strain

IX

If I were thou, red-breasted bird,
With song at shut up window heard,
Live Love's sweet " Yes " too long
deferred,

X

I would not overstay delight,
As thou,—but take a swallow-flight,
Till the new spring returned to sight

XI

While yet I spake a touch was laid
Upon my brow, whose pride did fade,
As thus, methought, an angel said ,

XII

" If I were *thou* who sing'st this song,
Most wise for others, and most strong
In seeing right while doing wrong,

XIII

" I would not waste my cares, and
choose,
As *thou*,—to seek what thou must
lose,
Such gains as perish in the use

XIV

" I would not work where none can
win,
As *thou*,—half way 'twixt grief and
sin,
But look above, and judge within

XV

" I would not let my pulse beat high,
As *thou*,—toward fame's regality,
Nor yet in love's great jeopardy

XVI

"I would not champ the hard cold
bit,
As *thou*,—of what the world thinks
fit,—
But take God's freedom, using it

XVII

"I would not play earth's winter out,
As *thou*,—but gird my soul about
And live for life past death and doubt

XVIII

"Then sing, O singer!—but allow
Beast fly, and bird, called foolsh now,
Are wise (for all thy scorn) as thou!"

THE CRY OF THE HUMAN

I

"THERE IS no God," the foolish
saith,—

But none, "There is no sorrow,"
And nature oft, the cry of faith,
In bitter need will borrow
Eyes, which the preacher could not
school,

By wayside graves are raised,
And lips say, "God be pitiful,"
Who ne'er said, "God be praised"
~~~~~ Be pitiful, O God!

## II

The tempest stretches from the steep  
The shadow of its coming,  
The beasts grow tame, and near us  
creep,

As help were in the human,  
Yet, while the cloud-wheels roll and  
grind,

We spirits tremble under!—

The hills have echoes, but we find

No answer for the thunder

Be pitiful, O God!

## III

The battle hurtles on the plains—

Earth feels new scythes upon her,

We reap our brothers for the wains,

And call the harvest honour,—

Draw face to face, front line to line,

One image all inherit,—

Then kill, curse on, by that same sign,

Clay, clay,—and spirit, spirit

Be pitiful, O God!

## IV

The plague runs festering through the  
town,

And never a bell is tolling,  
And corpses, jostled 'neath the moon  
Nod to the dead-cart's rolling,  
The young child calleth for the cup—  
The strong man brings it weeping,  
The mother from her babe looks up  
And shrieks away its sleeping  
Be pitiful, O God!

## V

The plague of gold strikes far and  
near,

And deep and strong it enters  
This purple chumar which we wear,  
Makes madder than the centaur's  
Our thoughts grow blank, our words  
grow strange,

We cheer the pale gold-diggers—  
Each soul is worth so much on  
'Change,

And marked, like sheep, with  
figures

Be pitiful, O God!

## VI

The curse of gold, upon the land  
The lack of bread enforces—

The rail-cars snort from strand to  
strand,

Like more of Death's White horses!  
The rich preach "rights" and future  
days,

And hear no angel scoffing,—

The poor die mute—withstarving gaze  
On corn-ships in the offing

Be pitiful, O God!

## VII

We meet together at the feast—

To private mirth betake us—

We stare down in the winecup, lest

Some vacant chair should shake us!

We name delight, and pledge it  
round—

"It shall be ours to-morrow!"

God's seraphs! do your voices sound  
As sad in naming sorrow?

Be pitiful, O God!

## VIII

We sit together, with the skies,

The steadfast skies, above us,

We look into each other's eyes,—

"And how long will you love us?"—

The eyes grow dim with prophecy,

The voices, low and breathless—

"Till death us part!"—O words to be

Our *best* for love the deathless!

Be pitiful, O God!

## IX

We tremble by the harmless bed  
Of one loved and departed—  
Our tears drop on the lips that said  
Last night, "Be stronger-hearted!"  
O God,—to clasp those fingers close,  
And yet to feel so lonely!—  
To see a light upon such brows,  
Which is the daylight only!  
Be pitiful, O God!

## X

The happy children come to us,  
And look up in our faces  
They ask us—Was it thus, and thus,  
When we were in their places?—  
We cannot speak,—we see anew  
The hills we used to live in,  
And feel our mother's smile press  
through  
The kisses she is giving  
Be pitiful, O God!

## XI

We pray together at the kirk,  
For mercy, mercy solely—  
Hands weary with the evil work,  
We lift them to the Holy  
The corpse is calm below our knee—  
Its spirit, bright before Thee—  
Between them, worse than either, we—  
Without the rest or glory!  
Be pitiful, O God!

## XII

We leave the communing of men,  
The murmur of the passions,  
And live alone, to live again  
With endless generations  
Are we so brave?—The sea and sky  
In silence lift their murmur,  
And, glassed therein, our spirits high  
Recoil from their own terrors  
Be pitiful, O God!

## XIII

We sit on hills our childhood wist,  
Woods, hamlets, streams, behold-  
ing  
The sun strikes through the farthest  
mist,  
The city's spire to golden  
The city's golden spire it was,  
When hope and health were  
strongest,  
But now it is the churchyard grass  
We look upon the longest  
Be pitiful, O God!

## XIV

And soon all vision waxeth dull—  
Men whisper, "He is dying!"  
We cry no more "Be pitiful!"  
We have no strength for crying  
No strength, no need! Then, soul  
mine,  
Look up and triumph rather—  
Lo! in the depth of God's Divine,  
The Son adures the Father—  
BE PITIFUL, O GOD

## A LAY OF THE EARLY ROSE

—"discordance that can accord"  
—*Romance of the Rose*

A ROSE once grew within  
A garden April-green  
In her loneliness, in her loneliness,  
And the fairer for that oneness

A white rose delicate  
On a tall bough and straight!  
Early comer, early comer,  
Never waiting for the summer

Her pretty gestes did win  
South winds to let her in,  
In her loneliness, in her loneliness,  
All the fairer for that oneness

"For if I wait," said she—  
"Till time for roses be—  
For the moss-rose and the musk-rose,  
Maiden-blush and royal-dusk rose,

"What glory then for me  
In such a company?—  
Roses plenty, roses plenty,  
And one nightingale for twenty?"

"Nay, let me in," said she,  
"Before the rest are free,—  
In my loneliness in my loneliness,  
All the fairer for that oneness

"For I would lonely stand,  
Uplifting my white hand,  
On a mission on a mission,  
To declare the coming vision

"Upon which lifted sign,  
What worship will be mine?  
What addressing, what caressing!  
And what thanks and praise and  
blessing!"

"A windlike joy will rush  
Through every tree and bush,  
Bending softly in affection  
And spontaneous benediction

"Insects, that only may  
Live in a sunbright ray,  
To my whiteness, to my whiteness,  
Shall be drawn, as to a brightness,—

"And every moth and bee  
Approach me reverently,  
Wheeling o'er me, wheeling o'er me,  
Coronals of motioned glory

"Three larks shall leave a cloud,  
To my whiter beauty vowed—  
Singing gladly all the moontide,—  
Never waiting for the suntide

"Ten nightingales shall flee  
Their woods for love of me,—  
Singing sadly all the suntide,  
Never waiting for the moontide

"I ween the very skies  
Will look down with surprise,  
When low on earth they see me  
With my starry aspect dreamy !

"And earth will call her flowers  
To hasten out of doors,—  
By their curtsies and sweet-smelling,  
To give grace to my foretelling "

So praying, did she win  
South winds to let her in,  
In her loneliness, in her loneliness,  
And the fairer for that oneness

But ah !—alas for her !  
No thing did minister  
To her praises, to her praises  
More than might unto a daisy's

No tree nor bush was seen  
To boast a perfect green,  
Scarcely having, scarcely having,  
One leaf broad enough for waving

The little flies did crawl  
Along the southern wall,—  
Faintly shifting, faintly shifting  
Wings scarce strong enough for lifting

The lark, too high or low,  
I ween, did miss her so,  
With his nest down in the gorses,  
And his song in the star-courses

The nightingale did please  
To loiter beyond seas  
Guess him in the Happy islands,  
Learning music from the silence

Only the bee, forsooth,  
Came in the place of both

Doing honour, doing honour  
To the honey-dews upon her

The skies looked coldly down,  
As on a royal crown,  
Then with drop for drop, at leisure,  
They began to rain for pleasure

Whereat the Earth did seem  
To waken from a dream,  
Winter-frozen, winter-frozen,  
Her unquiet eyes unclosing—

Said to the Rose—"Ha, Snow !  
And art thou fallen so ?  
Thou, who wert enthroned stately  
All along my mountains, lately ?

"Holla, thou world-wide snow !  
And art thou wasted so ?  
With a little bough to catch thee,  
And a little bee to watch thee ? "

—Poor Rose, to be misknown !  
Would she had ne'er been blown,  
In her loneliness, in her loneliness,—  
All the sadder for that oneness !

Some word she tried to say—  
Some *no* ah, wellaway !  
But the passion did o'ercome her,  
And the fair frail leaves dropped from her—

Dropped from her, fair and mute,  
Close to a poet's foot,  
Who beheld them, smiling slowly,  
As at something sad yet holy,—

Said "Verily and thus  
It chanceth eke with us  
Poets singing sweetest snatches,  
While that deaf men keep the  
watches—

"Vaunting to come before  
Our own age evermore  
In a loneliness, in a loneliness,  
And the nobler for that oneness

"Holy in voice and heart,—  
To high ends, set apart !  
All unmated, all unmated,  
Because so consecrated

"But if alone we be,  
Where is our empery ?  
And if none can reach our stature,  
Who can praise our lofty nature ?

"What bell will yield a tone,  
Swung in the air alone ?



If no brazen clapper bringing,  
Who can hear the chimed ringing ?

"What angel, but would seem  
To sensual eyes, ghost-dim ?  
And without assimilation,  
Vain is inter-penetration

"And thus, what can we do,  
Poor rose and poet too,  
Who both antedate our mission  
In an unprepared season ?

"Drop leaf—be silent, song—  
Cold things we come among  
We must warm them, we must warm  
them,

Ere we ever hope to charm them

"Howbert" (here his face  
Lightened around the place,—  
So to mark the outward turning  
Of his spirit's inward burning)—

"Something it is, to hold  
In God's worlds manifold,  
First revealed to creature-duty,  
Some new form of His mild Beauty

"Whether that form respect  
The sense or intellect,  
Holy be, in mood or meadow,  
The Chief Beauty's sign and shadow !

"Holy, in me and thee,  
Rose fallen from the tree,—  
Though the word stand dumb around  
us,  
All unable to expound us

"Though none us deign to bless,  
Blessed are we, nattheless,  
Blessed still and consecrated,  
In that, rose, we were created

"Oh, shame to poet's lays  
Sung for the dole of praise,—  
Hoarsely sung upon the highway  
With that '*Obolum da mihi*'

"Shame, shame to poet's soul  
Pining for such a dole,  
When Heaven-chosen to inherit  
The high throne of a chief spirit !

"Sit still upon your thrones,  
O ye poetic ones !  
And if, sooth, the world decry you,  
Let it pass unchallenged by you !

"Ye to yourselves suffice,  
Without its flatteries

Self-contentedly approve you  
Unto HIM who sits above you,—

"In prayers—that upward mount  
Like to a fair-sunned fount  
Which, in gushing back upon you,  
Hath an upper music won you,—

"In faith—that still perceives  
No rose can shed her leaves,  
Far less, poet fall from mission—  
With an unfulfilled fruition !

"In hope—that apprehends  
An end beyond these ends,  
And great uses rendered duly  
By the meanest song sung truly !

"In thanks—for all the good,  
By poets understood—  
For the sound of seraphs moving  
Down the hidden depths of loving,—

"For sights of things away,  
Through fissures of the clay,  
Promised things which *shall* be given  
And sung over, up in Heaven,—

"For life, so lovely-vain,—  
For death which breaks the chain,—  
For the sense of present sweetness,—  
And this yearning to completeness !"

## BERTHA IN THE LANE

### I

Put the broidery-frame away,  
For my sewing is all done !  
The last thread is used to-day,  
And I need not join it on  
Though the clock stands at the  
noon

I am weary ! I have sewn,  
Sweet, for thee, a wedding-gown

### II

Sister, help me to the bed,  
And stand near me, Dearest-sweet,  
Do not shrink nor be afraid,  
Blushing with a sudden heat !  
No one standeth in the street ?—  
By God's love I go to meet,  
Love I thee with love complete

### III

Lean thy face down ! drop it in  
These two hands, that I may hold  
'Twixt their palms thy cheek and  
chin,  
Stroking back the curls of gold

'Tis a fair, fair face, in sooth—  
Larger eyes and redder mouth  
Than mine were in my first youth

IV

Thou art younger by seven years—  
Ah!—so bashful at my gaze,  
That the lashes, hung with tears,  
Grow too heavy to upraise?  
I would wound thee by no touch  
Which thy shyness feels as such—  
Dost thou mind me, Dear, so  
much?

V

Have I not been nigh a mother  
To thy sweetness—tell me, Dear?  
Have we not loved one another  
Tenderly, from year to year,  
Since our dying mother mild  
Said with accents undefiled,  
“Child, be mother to this child!”

VI

Mother, mother, up in heaven,  
Stand up on the jasper sea,  
And be witness I have given  
All the gifts required of me,—  
Hope that blessed me, bliss that  
crowned,  
Love, that left me with a wound,  
Life itself that turneth round!

VII

Mother, mother, thou art kind,  
Thou art standing in the room,—  
In a molten glory shrined,  
That rays off into the gloom!  
But thy smile is bright and bleak  
Like cold waves—I cannot speak,  
I sob in it, and grow weak

VIII

Ghostly mother, keep aloof  
One hour longer from my soul—  
For I still am thinking of  
Earth's warm-beating joy and  
dole!  
On my finger is a ring  
Which I still see glittering,  
When the night hides everything

IX

Little sister, thou art pale!  
Ah, I have a wandering brain—  
But I lose that fever-bale,  
And my thoughts grow calm again  
Lean down closer—closer still!  
I have words thine ear to fill,—  
And would kiss thee at my will.

X

Dear, I heard thee in the spring,  
Thee and Robert—through the  
trees,—

When we all went gathering  
Boughs of may-bloom for the bees  
Do not start so! think instead  
How the sunshine overhead  
Seemed to trickle through the shade

XI

What a day it was, that day!  
Hills and vales did openly  
Seem to heave and throb away  
At the sight of the great sky  
And the Silence, as it stood  
In the Glory's golden flood,  
Audibly did bud—and bud

XII

Through the winding hedgerows green,  
How we wandered, I and you,—  
With the bowery tops shut in,  
And the gates that showed the  
view—  
How we talked there! thrushes soft  
Sang our pauses out—or oft  
Bleatings took them, from the croft

XIII

Till the pleasure grown too strong  
Left me muter evermore,  
And, the winding road being long,  
I walked out of sight, before,  
And so, wrapt in musings fond,  
Issued (past the wayside pond)  
On the meadow-lands beyond

XIV

I sate down beneath the beech  
Which leans over to the lane,  
And the far sound of your speech  
Did not promise any pain  
And I blessed you full and free,  
With a smile stooped tenderly  
O'er the may-flowers on my knee

XV

But the sound grew into word  
As the speakers drew more near—  
Sweet, forgive me that I heard  
What you wished me not to hear  
Do not weep so—do not shake—  
Oh,—I heard thee, Bertha, make  
Good true answers for my sake

XVI

Yes, and HE too! let him stand  
In thy thoughts, untouched by  
blame

Could he help it, if my hand  
He had claimed with hasty claim?  
That was wrong perhaps—but  
then  
Such things be—and will, again!  
Women cannot judge for men

## XVII

Had he seen thee, when he swore  
He would love but me alone?  
Thou wert absent,—sent before  
To our kin in Sidmouth town  
When he saw thee who art best  
Past compare and loveliest,  
He but judged thee as the rest

## XVIII

Could we blame him with grave words,  
Thou and I, Dear, if we might?  
Thy brown eyes have looks like birds,  
Flying straightway to the light  
Mine are older—Hush!—look out—  
Up the street! Is none without?  
How the poplar swings about!

## XIX

And that hour—beneath the beech,—  
When I listened in a dream,  
And he said in his deep speech,  
That he owed me all *esteem*,—  
Each word swam in on my brain  
With a dim, dilating pain,  
Till it burst with that last strain—

## XX

I fell flooded with a Dark,  
In the silence of a swoon—  
When I rose, still cold and stark,  
There was night,—I saw the moon  
And the stars, each in its place,  
And the may-blooms on the grass,  
Seemed to wonder what I was

## XXI

And I walked as if apart  
From myself, when I could stand—  
And I pitied my own heart,  
As if I held it in my hand,—  
Somewhat coldly,—with a sense  
Of fulfilled benevolence,  
And a "Poor thing" negligence

## XXII

And I answered coldly too,  
When you met me at the door,  
And I only *heard* the dew  
Dripping from me to the floor  
And the flowers I bade you see,  
Were too withered for the bee,—  
As my life, henceforth, for me

## XXIII

Do not weep so—Dear—heart-warm!  
It was best as it befell!  
If I say he did me harm,  
I speak wild,—I am not well  
All his words were kind and good—  
*He esteemed me!* Only, blood  
Runs so faint in womanhood

## XXIV

Then I always was too grave,—  
Liked the saddest ballads sung,—  
With that look besides, we have  
In our faces, who die young  
I had died, Dear, all the same—  
Life's long, joyous, jostling game  
Is too loud for my meek shame

## XXV

We are so unlike each other,  
Thou and I, that none could guess  
We were children of one mother,  
But for mutual tenderness  
Thou art rose-lined from the cold,  
And meant, verily, to hold  
Life's pure pleasures manifold

## XXVI

I am pale as crocus grows  
Close beside a rose-tree's root!  
Whosoe'er would reach the rose,  
Treads the crocus underfoot—  
I, like may-bloom on thorn-tree—  
Thou, like merry summer-bee!  
Fit that I be plucked for thee

## XXVII

Yet who plucks me?—no one  
mourns—  
I have lived my season out,—  
And now die of my own thorns  
Which I could not live without  
Sweet, be merry! How the light  
Comes and goes! If it be night,  
Keep the candles in my sight

## XXVIII

Are there footsteps at the door?  
Look out quickly Yea, or nay?  
Some one might be waiting for  
Some last word that I might say  
Nay? So best!—So angels would  
Stand off clear from deathly road,  
Not to cross the sight of God

## XXIX

Colder grow my hands and feet—  
When I wear the shroud I made,  
Let the folds be straight and neat,  
And the rosemary be spread,—

That if any friend should come,  
(To see *thee*, sweet !) all the room  
May be lifted out of gloom.

xxx

And, dear Bertha, let me keep  
On my hand this little ring,  
Which at night, when others sleep,  
I can still see glittering.  
Let me wear it out of sight,  
In the grave,—where it will light  
All the Dark up, day and night.

xxxix

On that grave, drop not a tear !  
Else, though fathom-deep the  
place,  
Through the woollen shroud I wear,  
I shall feel it on my face.  
Rather smile there, blessed one,  
Thinking of me in the sun—  
Or forget me—smiling on !

xxxix

Art thou near me ? nearer ? so !  
Kiss me close upon the eyes,  
That the earthly light may go  
Sweetly as it used to rise,  
When I watched the morning-grey  
Strike, betwixt the hills, the way  
He was sure to come that day.

xxxix

So,—no more vain words be said !—  
The hosannas nearer roll—  
Mother, smile now on thy Dead,  
I am death-strong in my soul.  
Mystic Dove alit on cross,  
Guide the poor bird of the snows  
Through the snow-wind above  
loss !

xxxix

Jesus, Victim, comprehending  
Love's divine self-abnegation,—  
Cleanse my love in its self-spending,  
And absorb the poor libation !  
Wind my thread of life up higher,  
Up, through angels' hands of fire !—  
I aspire while I expire !—

## LOVED ONCE

I

I CLASSED, appraising once,  
Earth's lamentable sounds,—the well-  
aday,  
The jarring yea and nay,  
The fall of kisses on unanswering clay,

The sobbed farewell, the welcome  
mournfuller ;—

But all did leaven the air  
With a less bitter leaven of sure  
despair,  
Than these words—" I loved  
ONCE."

II

And who saith, " I loved ONCE ? "  
Not angels,—whose clear eyes, love,  
love, foresee,  
Love through eternity,  
And, by To Love, do apprehend To  
Be.  
Not God, called Love, His noble  
crown-name,—casting  
A light too broad for blasting !  
The great God changing not from  
everlasting,  
Saith never, " I loved ONCE."

III

Oh, never the " Loved ONCE,"  
Dost THOU say, Victim-Christ, mis-  
prized friend !  
The cross and curse may rend,  
But having loved Thou lovest to the  
end !  
This is man's saying—man's. Too  
weak to move  
One sphered star above,  
Man desecrates the eternal God-word  
Love  
With his No More, and Once.

IV

How say ye, " We loved once." "  
Blasphemers ? Is your earth not  
cold enow,  
Mourners, without that snow ?  
Ah, friends ! and would ye wrong each  
other so ?  
And could ye say of some whose love  
is known,  
Whose prayers have met your  
own,  
Whose tears have fallen for you,  
whose smiles have shone,  
Such words, " We loved them  
ONCE ? "

V

Could ye, " We loved her once," "  
Say calm of *me*, sweet friends, when  
out of sight ?  
When hearts of better right  
Stand in between me and your happy  
light ?

Or when, as flowers kept too long in  
the shade,  
Ye find my colours fade,  
And all that is not love in me, de-  
cayed ?  
Such words—Ye loved me ONCE !

## VI

Could ye, "We loved her once,"  
Say cold of me when further put  
away  
In earth's sepulchral clay ?  
When mute the lips which deprecate  
to-day ?—  
Not so ! not then—*least* then ! When  
Life is shriven  
And Death's full joy is given,—  
Of those who sit and love you up in  
Heaven,  
Say not, "We loved them once "

## VII

Say never, ye loved ONCE !  
God is too near above, the grave be-  
low,  
And all our moments go  
Too quickly past our souls, for saying  
so  
The mysteries of Life and Death  
avenge  
Affections light of range—  
There comes no change to justify that  
change,  
Whatever comes—Loved ONCE !

## VIII

And yet that word of ONCE  
Is humanly acceptive Kings have  
said  
Shaking a discrowned head,  
"We ruled once,"—dotards, "We  
once taught and led,"—  
Cripples once danced ! the vines,—  
and bards approved  
Were once by scornings, moved  
But love strikes one hour—LOVE  
Those *never* loved,  
Who dream that they loved ONCE

### A RHAPSODY OF LIFE'S PROGRESS

"Fill all the s'ops of life with tuneful breath"  
—*Poems on Man by Cornelius Mat hews* 1

## I

WE are borne into life—it is sweet, it  
is strange !

<sup>1</sup> A small volume by an American poet—as  
remarkable in thought and manner for a vital  
sinewy vigour, as the right arm of Pathfinder

We lie still on the knee of a mild  
Mystery,  
Which smiles with a change !  
But we doubt not of changes, we  
know not of spaces,  
The Heavens seem as near as our own  
mother's face is,  
And we think we could touch all the  
stars that we see,  
And the milk of our mother is white  
on our mouth,  
And, with small childish hands, we  
are turning around  
The apple of Life which another has  
found,—  
It is warm with our touch, not with  
sun of the south,  
And we count, as we turn it, the red  
side for four—  
O Life, O Beyond,  
Thou art sweet, thou art strange  
evermore

## II

Then all things look strange in the  
pure golden ether  
We walk through the gardens with  
hands linked together,  
And the lilies look large as the  
trees,  
And as loud as the birds, sing the  
bloom-loving bees,—  
And the birds sing like angels, so  
mystical-fine,  
And the cedars are brushing the arch-  
angel's feet,  
And time is eternity,—love is divine,  
And the world is complete  
Now, God bless the child,—father,  
mother, respond !  
O Life, O Beyond,  
Thou art strange, thou art sweet

## III

Then we leap on the earth with the  
armour of youth,  
And the earth rings again,  
And we breathe out, "O beauty,"—  
we cry out, "O truth,"—  
And the bloom of our lips drops with  
wine,  
And our blood runs amazed 'neath  
the calm hyaline,—  
The earth cleaves to the foot, the sun  
burns to the brain,—  
What is this exultation ? and what  
this despair ?—

The strong pleasure is smiting the  
nerves into pain,  
And we drop from the Fair, as we  
climb to the Fair,  
And we lie in a trance at its feet,  
And the breath of an angel cold-  
piercing the air  
Breathes fresh on our faces in  
swoon,  
And we think him so near he is this  
side the sun,  
And we wake to a whisper self-mur-  
mured and fond,  
O Life O Beyond,  
Thou art strange, thou art sweet !

## IV

And the winds and the waters in  
pastoral measures  
Go winding around us, with roll upon  
roll,  
Till the soul lies within in a circle of  
pleasures  
Which hideth the soul  
And we run with the stag, and we  
leap with the horse,  
And we swim with the fish through  
the broad water-course,  
And we strike with the falcon, and  
hunt with the hound,  
And the joy which is in us, flies out  
with a wound,—  
And we shout so aloud, "We exult,  
we rejoice,"  
That we lose the low moan of our  
brothers around,—  
And we shout so adeep down crea-  
tion's profound  
We are deaf to God's voice—  
And we bind the rose-garland on  
forehead and ears,  
Yet we are not ashamed,  
And the dew of the roses that runneth  
unblamed  
Down our cheeks, is not taken for  
tears  
Help us, God, trust us, man, love  
us, woman ! "I hold  
Thy small head in my hands,—with  
its grapelets of gold  
Growing bright through my fingers,—  
like altar for oath,  
'Neath the vast golden spaces like  
witnessing faces  
That watch the eternity strong in the  
troth—

I love thee, I leave thee,—  
Live for thee, die for thee !  
I prove thee, deceive thee,—  
Undo evermore thee !  
Help me, God, slay me, man !—one  
is mourning for both !"  
And we stand up though young near  
the funeral-sheet  
Which covers the Cæsar and old  
Pharamond,  
And death is so nigh us Life cools  
from its heat—  
O Life, O Beyond,  
Art thou fair,—art thou sweet ?

## V

Then we act to a purpose—we spring  
up erect—  
We will tame the wild mouths of the  
wilderness-steeds,  
We will plough up the deep in the  
ships double-decked,  
We will build the great cities, and do  
the great deeds—  
Strike the steel upon steel, strike the  
soul upon soul,  
Strike the dole on the weal, overcom-  
ing the dole,—  
Let the cloud meet the cloud in a  
grand thunder-roll !  
"While the eagle of Thought rides  
the tempest in scorn,  
Who cares if the lightning is burning  
the corn ?  
Let us sit on the thrones  
In a purple sublimity,  
And grind down men's bones  
To a pale unanimity  
Speed me, God !—serve me, man !—I  
am god over men !  
When I speak in my cloud, none shall  
answer again—  
'Neath the stripe and the bond,  
Lie and mourn at my feet !"—  
O thou Life, O Beyond,  
Thou art strange, thou art  
sweet !

## VI

Then we grow into thought,—and  
with inward ascensions  
Touch the bounds of our Being !  
We lie in the dark here, swathed  
doubly around  
With our sensual relations and social  
conversions,

You are 'ware of a sight, yet are 'ware  
of a sound

Beyond Hearing and Seeing,—  
Are aware that a Hades rolls deep on  
all sides

With its infinite tides  
About and above us,—until the strong  
arch

Of our life creaks and bends as if  
ready for falling,

And through the dim rolling, we  
hear the sweet calling

Of spirits that speak, in a soft under-  
tongue,

The sense of the mystical march,  
And we cry to them softly "Come

nearer, come nearer,  
And lift up the lap of this Dark, and  
speak clearer,

And teach us the song that ye  
sung"

And we smile in our thought if they  
answer or no —

For to dream of a sweetness is sweet  
as to know!

Wonders breathe in our face

And we ask not their name,

Love takes all the blame

Of the world's prison-place!

And we sing back the songs as we  
guess them aloud,

And we send up the lark of our music  
that cuts

Untired through the cloud,  
To beat with its wings at the lattice

Heaven shuts,  
Yet the angels look down and the  
mortals look up

As the little wings beat,  
And the poet is blessed with their  
pity or hope

'Twixt the Heavens and the earth,  
can a poet despond?

O Life, O Beyond,

Thou art strange, thou art sweet!

#### VII

Then we wring from our souls their  
applicative strength,

And bend to the cord the strong bow  
of our ken,

And bringing our lives to the level of  
others,

Hold the cup we have filled, to their  
uses at length—

"Help me, God! love me, man! I am  
man among men,

And my life is a pledge  
Of the ease of another's!"

From the fire and the water we drive  
out the steam

With a rush and a roar and the speed  
of a dream,

And the car without horses the car  
without wings

Roars onward and flies

On its pale iron edge,  
'Neath the heat of a Thought sitting

still in our eyes,  
And the hand knots in air, with the  
bridge that it flings,

Two peaks far disrupted by ocean and  
skies,—

And, lifting a fold of the smooth flow-  
ing Thames,

Draws under, the world with its tur-  
moils and potholes,

While the swans float on softly,  
untouched in their calms

By Humanity's hum at the root of  
the springs!

And with reachings of Thought we  
reach down to the deeps

Of the souls of our brothers,—

We teach them full words with our  
slow-moving lips,

"God," "Liberty," "Truth,"—  
which they hearken and

think  
And work into harmony, link upon  
link

Till the silver meets round the earth  
geld and dense,

Shedding sparks of electric respond-  
ence intense

On the dark of eclipse!

Then we hear through the silence and  
glory afar

As from shores of a star  
In apheion,—the new generations

that cry  
In attune to our voice and harmoni-  
ous reply

"God," "Liberty," "Truth!"

We are glorious forsooth—

And our name has a seat,

Though the shroud should be  
donned!

O Life, O Beyond,

Thou art strange, thou art sweet!

#### VIII

Help me, God—help me, man, I am  
low, I am weak—

Death loosens my sinews and creeps  
in my veins

My body is cleft by these wedges of  
pains,

From my spirit's serene,  
And I feel the externe and insensate  
creep in

On my organised clay

I sob not, nor shriek,

Yet I faint fast away!

I am strong in the spirit,—deep-  
thoughted, clear-eyed—

I could walk, step for step, with an  
angel beside,

On the Heaven-heights of  
truth!

Oh, the soul keeps its youth—

But the body faints sore, it is tired in  
the race,—

It sinks from the chariot ere reaching  
the goal,

It is weak, it is cold,

The rein drops from its hold—

It sinks back, with the death in its  
face

On, chariot—on, soul,—

Ye are all the more fleet—

Be alone at the goal

Of the strange and the sweet!

## IX

Love us, God, love us, man! we be-  
lieve, we achieve—

Let us love, let us live,

For the acts correspond—

We are glorious—and DIE!

And again on the knee of a mild  
Mystery

That smiles with a change,

Here we lie

O DEATH, O BEYOND,

Thou art sweet, thou art strange!

## L E L'S LAST QUESTION

"Do you think of me as I think of you?"

(From her poem written during the voyage  
to the Cape)

## I

"Do you think of me as I think of you,  
My friends, my friends?"—She said  
it from the sea,

The English minstrel in her min-  
strelsy,

While under brighter skies than erst  
she knew

Her heart grew dark—and groped  
there, as the blind,

To reach across the waves friends left  
behind—

"Do you think of me as I think of  
you?"

## II

It seemed not much to ask—As I of  
you?

We all do ask the same No eyelids  
cover

Within the meekest eyes, that ques-  
tion over—

And little in the world the Loving  
do

But sit (among the rocks?) and listen  
for

The echo of their own love evermore—  
"Do you think of me as I think of  
you?"

## III

Love learned, she had sung of love  
and love—

And, like a child that sleeping with  
dropt head

Upon the fairy-book he lately read,  
Whatever household noises round

him move

Hears in his dream some elfin turbu-  
lence—

Even so, suggestive to her inward  
sense,

All sounds of life assumed one tune of  
love

## IV

And when the glory of her dream  
withdrew,—

When knightly gestes and courtly  
pageantries

Were broken in her visionary eyes

By tears the solemn seas attested  
true,—

Forgetting that sweet lute beside her  
hand

She asked not,—Do you praise me, O  
my land?

But,—Think ye of me, friends, as I  
of you?"

## V

Hers was the hand that played for  
many a year

Love's silver phrase for England,—  
smooth and well!

Would God, her heart's more inward  
oracle

In that lone moment might confirm  
her dear!



For when her questioned friends in  
 agony  
 Made passionate response,—“ We  
 think of *thee*, ”—  
 Her place was in the dust, too deep to  
 hear

## VI

Could she not wait to catch their  
 answering breath ?  
 Was she content—content—with  
 ocean's sound,  
 Which dashed its mocking infinite  
 around  
 One thirsty for a little love ?—be-  
 neath  
 Those stars, content,—where last  
 her song had gone,—  
*They*, mute and cold in radiant life,—  
 as soon  
 Their singer was to be, in darksome  
 death ? <sup>1</sup>

## VII

Bring your vain answers—cry, “ We  
 think of *thee* ! ”  
 How think ye of her ? warm in long  
 ago  
 Delights ?—or crowned with budding  
 bays ? Not so  
 None smile and none are crowned  
 where lieth she, —  
 With all her visions unfulfil'd save  
 one—  
 Her childhood's—of the palm-trees  
 in the sun—  
 And lo ! their shadow on her sepul-  
 chre !

## VIII

“ Do ye think of me as I think of  
 you ? ”—  
 O friends,—O kindred,—O dear  
 brotherhood  
 Of all the world ! what are we, that  
 we should  
 For covenants of long affection sue ?  
 Why press so near each other when  
 the touch  
 Is barred by graves ? Not much,  
 and yet too much,  
 Is this “ Think of me as I think of  
 you ”

## IX

But while on mortal lips I shape anew  
 A sigh to mortal issues,—verily

<sup>1</sup> Her lyric on the Polar star came home  
 with her latest papers

Above the unshaken stars that see us  
 die,  
 A vocal pathos rolls ! and HE who  
 drew  
 All life from dust, and for all, tasted  
 death,  
 By death and life and love, appealing,  
 saith,  
 “ *Do you think of Me as I think of  
 you ?* ”

## THE HOUSE OF CLOUDS

## I

I WOULD build a cloudy House  
 For my thoughts to live in,  
 When for earth too fancy-loose,  
 And too low for Heaven !  
 Hush ! I talk my dream aloud—  
 I build it bright to see,—  
 I build it on the moonlit cloud,  
 To which I looked with *thee*

## II

Cloud-walls of the morning's grey,  
 Faced with amber column,—  
 Crowned with crimson cupola  
 From a sunset solemn !  
 May-mists, for the casements, fetch  
 Pale and glimmering,  
 With a sunbeam hid in each,  
 And a smell of spring

## III

Build the entrance high and proud,  
 Darkening and then brightening,  
 Of a riven thunder-cloud,  
 Veined by the lightning,  
 Use one with an iris-stain  
 For the door within,  
 Turning to a sound like rain  
 As I enter in

## IV

Build a spacious hall thereby,  
 Boldly, never fearing,  
 Use the blue place of the sky  
 Which the wind is clearing,—  
 Branched with corridors sublime,  
 Flecked with winding stairs—  
 Such as children wish to climb,  
 Following their own prayers

## V

In the mutest of the house,  
 I will have my chamber  
 Silence at the door shall use  
 Evening's light of amber,  
 Solemnising every mood,  
 Softening in degree,—

Turning sadness into good,  
As I turn the key

## VI

Be my chamber tapestried  
With the showers of summer,  
Close, but soundless,—glorified  
When the sunbeams come here,  
Wandering harpers, harping on  
Waters stringed for such,—  
Drawing colours, for a tune,  
With a vibrant touch

## VII

Bring a shadow green and still  
From the chestnut forest,  
Bring a purple from the hill,  
When the heat is sorest,  
Spread them out from wall to wall,  
Carpet-wove around,—  
Whereupon the foot shall fall  
In light instead of sound

## VIII

Bring the fantasque cloudlets home  
From the noontide zenith,  
Ranged for sculptures round the  
room,—  
Named as Fancy weeneth,  
Some be Junos, without eyes;  
Naiads, without sources,  
Some be birds of paradise,  
Some, Olympian horses

## IX

Bring the dews the birds shake off,  
Waking in the hedges,—  
Those too, perfumed for a proof,  
From the lilies' edges  
From our England's field and moor,  
Bring them calm and white in,  
Whence to form a mirror pure  
For Love's self-delighting

## X

Bring a grey cloud from the east  
Where the lark is singing,  
Something of the song at least  
Unlost in the bringing,  
That shall be a morning chair  
Poet-dream may sit in,  
When it leans out on the air,  
Unrhymed and unwritten

## XI

Bring the red cloud from the sun !  
While he sinketh, catch it,  
That shall be a couch,—with one  
Sidelong star to watch it,—

Fit for poet's finest Thought,  
At the curfew-sounding,—  
Things unseen being nearer brought  
Than the seen, around him

## XII

Poet's thought,—not poet's sigh !  
'Las, they come together !  
Cloudy walls divide and fly,  
As in April weather !  
Cupola and column proud,  
Structure bright to see—  
Gone ! except that moonlit cloud  
To which I looked with *thee* !

## XIII

Let them ! Wipe such visionings  
From the Fancy's cartel—  
Love secures some fairer things  
Dowered with his immortal  
The sun may darken,—heaven be  
bowed—  
But still, unchanged shall be,—  
Here in my soul,—that moonlit  
cloud,  
To which I looked with *THEE* !

## CATARINA TO CAMOENS

DYING IN HIS ABSENCE ABROAD, AND  
REFERRING TO THE POEM IN  
WHICH HE RECORDED THE  
SWEETNESS OF HER EYES

## I

ON the door you will not enter,  
I have gazed too long—adieu !  
Hope withdraws her peradventure—  
Death is near me,—and not *you* !  
Come O lover  
Close and cover  
These poor eyes, you called, I ween,  
" Sweetest eyes were ever seen "

## II

When I heard you sing that burden  
In my vernal days and bowers,  
Other praises disregarding,  
I but hearkened that of yours—  
Only saying  
In heart-playing,  
" Blessed eyes mine eyes have been,  
If the sweetest, *his* have seen ! "

## III

But all changes At this vesper,  
Cold the sun shines down the door.  
If you stood there, would you whisper  
" Love, I love you," as before,—

Death pervading  
Now and shading  
Eyes you sang of, that yestreen,  
As the sweetest ever seen ?

## IV

Yes ! I think, were you beside them,  
Near the bed I die upon,—  
Though their beauty you denied them,  
As you stood there, looking down,  
You would truly  
Call them duly,  
For the love's sake found therein,—  
"Sweetest eyes were ever seen"

## V

And if *you* looked down upon them,  
And if *they* looked up to *you*  
All the light which has foregone them  
Would be gathered back anew !  
They would truly  
Be as duly  
Love - transformed to Beauty's  
sheen,—  
"Sweetest eyes were ever seen"

## VI

But, ah me ! you only see me  
In your thoughts of loving man,  
Smiling soft perhaps and dreamy  
Through the wavings of my fan,—  
And unweeting  
Go repeating,  
In your reverie serene,  
"Sweetest eyes were ever seen"

## VII

While my spirit leans and reaches  
From my body still and pale,  
Fain to hear what tender speech is  
In your love to help my bale—  
O my poet,  
Come and show it !  
Come, of latest love, to glean  
"Sweetest eyes were ever seen"

## VIII

O my poet, O my prophet,  
When you praised their sweetness  
so  
Did you think, in singing of it,  
That it might be near to go ?  
Had you fancies  
From their glances,  
That the grave would quickly screen  
"Sweetest eyes were ever seen ?"

## IX

No reply ! The fountain's warble  
In the court-yard sounds alone

As the water to the marble  
So my heart falls with a moan,  
From love-sighing  
To this dying !

Death forerunneth Love to win  
"Sweetest eyes were ever seen"

## X

Will you come ? When I'm departed  
Where all sweetnesses are hid—  
When thy voice, my tender-hearted,  
Will not lift up either lid  
Cry, O lover,  
Love is over !

Cry beneath the cypress green—  
"Sweetest eyes were ever seen"

## XI

When the angelus is ringing,  
Near the convent will you walk,  
And recall the choral singing  
Which brought angels down our  
talk ?

Spirit-shriven  
I viewed Heaven,  
Till you smiled—"Is earth unclean,  
Sweetest eyes were ever seen ?"

## XII

When beneath the palace-lattice,  
You ride slow as you have done,  
And you see a face there—that is  
Not the old familiar one,—  
Will you oftly  
Murmur softly,

"Here, ye watched me morn and  
even,  
Sweetest eyes were ever seen !"

## XIII

When the palace ladies sitting  
Round your gittern shall have  
said,  
"Poet, sing those verses written  
For the lady who is dead,"—  
Will you tremble,  
Yet dissemble—

Or sing hoarse, with tears between,  
"Sweetest eyes were ever seen ?"

## XIV

"Sweetest eyes !" how sweet in flow-  
ings,  
The repeated cadence is !  
Though you sang a hundred poems,  
Still the best one would be this  
I can hear it  
"Twixt my spirit  
And the earth-noise intervene—  
"Sweetest eyes were ever seen !"

## XV

But the priest waits for the praying,  
And the choir are on their knees,  
And the soul must pass away in  
Strains more solemn high than  
these

*Miserere*

For the weary—  
Oh, no longer for Catrine  
"Sweetest eyes were ever seen!"

## XVI

Keep my riband, take and keep it,—  
I have loosed it from my hair,<sup>1</sup>  
Feeling, while you overweep it,  
Not alone in your despair,—  
Since with saintly  
Watch, unfaintly,  
Out of Heaven shall o'er you lean  
"Sweetest eyes were ever seen"

## XVII

But—but *now*—yet unremoved  
Up to Heaven, they glen fast  
You may cast away, Beloved,  
In your future all my past!  
Such old phrases  
May be praises  
For some fairer bosom-queen—  
"Sweetest eyes were ever seen!"

## XVIII

Eyes of mine what are ye doing?  
Faithless, faithless,—praised amiss  
If a tear be of your showing,  
Dropt for any hope of his!  
Death has boldness  
Besides coldness,  
If unworthy tears demean  
"Sweetest eyes were ever seen"

## XIX

I will look out to his future—  
I will bless it till it shine  
Should he ever be a suitor  
Unto sweeter eyes than mine,  
Sunshine gild them,  
Angels shield them,  
Whatsoever eyes terrene  
Be the sweetest his have seen!

## A PORTRAIT

"One name is Elizabeth"—BEN JONSON  
I will paint her as I see her  
Ten times have the lilies blown,  
Since she looked upon the sun

<sup>1</sup> She left him the riband from her hair

And her face is lily-clear—  
Lily-shaped, and drooped in duty  
To the law of its own beauty

Oval cheeks encoloured faintly,  
Which a trail of golden hair  
Keeps from fading off to air

And a forehead fair and saintly,  
Which two blue eyes undershine,  
Like meek prayers before a shrine.

Face and figure of a child,—  
Though too calm, you think, and  
tender,  
For the childhood you would lend  
her

Yet child-simple, undefiled,  
Frank, obedient,—waiting still  
On the turnings of your will

Moving light, as all young things,—  
As young birds, or early wheat  
When the wind blows over it

Only, free from flutterings  
Of loud mirth that scorneth  
measure—  
Taking love for her chief pleasure

Choosing pleasures (for the rest)  
Which comes softly—just as *she*,  
When she nestles at your knee

Quiet talk she liketh best,  
In a bower of gentle looks,—  
Watering flowers, or reading books.

And her voice, it murmurs lowly,  
As a silver stream may run  
Which yet feels, you feel, the sun.

And her smile it seems half holy,  
As if drawn from thoughts more far  
Than our common jestings are

And if any poet knew her,  
He would sing of her with falls  
Used in lovely madrigals

And if any painter drew her,  
He would paint her unaware  
With a halo round her hair

And if reader read the poem,  
He would whisper—"You have  
done a  
Consecrated little Una!"

And a dreamer (did you show him  
That same picture) would exclaim,  
" 'Tis my angel, with a name!"

And a stranger—when he sees her  
In the street even—smileth stilly,  
Just as *you* would at a lily

And all voices that address her,  
Softly, sleeken every word,—  
As if speaking to a bird

And all fancies yearn to cover  
The hard earth whereon she passes,  
With the thymy scented grasses

And all hearts do pray, "God love  
her!"

Ay, and certes, in good sooth,  
We may all be sure HE DOETH

### SLEEPING AND WATCHING

#### I

SLEEP on, baby, on the floor,  
Tired of all the playing,—  
Sleep with smile the sweeter for  
That you dropped away in!  
On your curls' full roundness, stand  
Golden lights serenely—  
One cheek pushed out by the hand  
Folds the dimple inly  
Little head and little foot  
Heavy laid for pleasure  
Underneath the lids half-shut,  
Slants the shining azure,—  
Open-soul in noonday sun,  
So, you lie and slumber!  
Nothing evil having done,  
Nothing can encumber

#### II

I, who cannot sleep as well,  
Shall I sigh to view you?  
Or sigh further to foretell  
All that may undo you?  
Nay, keep smiling, little child,  
Ere the sorrow neareth,—  
I will smile too Patience mild  
Pleasure's token weareth  
Nay keep sleeping before loss,  
I shall sleep though losing!  
As by cradle, so by cross,  
Sure is the reposing

#### III

And God knows Who sees us twain,  
Child at childish leisure,  
I am near as tired of pain  
As you seem of pleasure,—  
Very soon too, by His grace  
Gently wrapt around me,  
Shall I show as calm a face,  
Shall I sleep as soundly!

Differing in this, that you  
Clasp your playthings sleeping,  
While my hand shall drop the few  
Given to my keeping!  
Differing in this, that I  
Sleeping shall be colder,  
And in waking presently,  
Brighter to beholder!  
Differing in this beside  
(Sleeper, have you heard me?  
Do you move, and open wide  
Eyes of wonder toward me?)—  
That while you I thus recall  
From your sleep,—I solely,—  
Me from mine an angel shall,  
With reveillie holy!

### WINE OF CYPRUS

GIVEN TO ME BY H S BOYD, ESQ.,  
AUTHOR OF "SELECT PASSAGES  
FROM THE GREEK FATHERS,"  
ETC.,

*To whom these stanzas are addressed*

#### I

If old Bacchus were the speaker  
He would tell you with a sigh,  
Of the Cyprus in this beaker  
I am sipping like a fly,—  
Like a fly or gnat on Ida  
At the hour of goblet-pledge,  
By Queen Juno blushed aside, a  
Full white arm-sweep, from the  
edge

#### II

Sooth, the drinking should be ampler,  
When the drink is so divine,  
And some deep-mouthed Greek ex-  
ampler  
Would become your Cyprus wine!  
Cyclop's mouth might plunge aright  
in,  
While his one eye over-leered—  
Nor too large were mouth of Titan,  
Drinking rivers down his beard

#### III

Pan might dip his head so deep in,  
That his ears alone pricked out,  
Fauns around him, pressing leaping,  
Each one pointing to his throat  
While the Naiads like Bacchantes,  
Wild, with urns thrown out to  
waste,

Cry,—“ O earth, that thou wouldst  
grant us  
Springs to keep, of such a taste ! ”

## IV

But for me, I am not worthy  
After gods and Greeks to drink,  
And my lips are pale and earthy  
To go bathing from this brink  
Since you heard them speak the last  
time,

They have faded from their blooms,  
And the laughter of my pastime  
Has learnt silence at the tombs

## V

Ah, my friend ! the antique drinkers  
Crowned the cup and crowned the  
brow

Can I answer the old thinkers  
In the forms they thought of, now ?  
Who will fetch from garden-closes  
Some new garlands while I speak,  
That the forehead, crowned with  
roses,

May strike scarlet down the cheek ?

## VI

Do not mock me ! with my mortal,  
Suits no wreath again, indeed !  
I am sad-voiced as the turtle  
Which Anacreon used to feed,  
Yet as that same bird demurely  
Wet her beak in cup of his,—  
So, without a garland, surely  
I may touch the brim of this

## VII

Go !—let others praise the Chian !—  
This is soft as Muses' string—  
This is tawny as Rhea's lion,  
This is rapid as its spring,—  
Bright as Paphia's eyes e'er met us,  
Light as ever trod her feet !  
And the brown bees of Hymettus  
Make their honey not so sweet

## VIII

Very copious are my praises  
Though I sip it like a fly !—  
Ah—but, sipping,—times and places  
Change before me suddenly—  
As Ulysses' old libation  
Drew the ghosts from every part,  
So your Cyprus wine, dear Grecian,  
Stirs the Hades of my heart

## IX

And I think of those long mornings  
Which my thought goes far to seek,

When, betwixt the folio's turnings,  
Solemn flowed the rhythmic Greek  
Past the pane, the mountain spreading,  
Swept the sheep-bell's tinkling  
noise

While a girlish voice was reading,—  
Somewhat low for α's and ο's

## X

Then what golden hours were for us !—  
While we sate together there,  
How the white vests of the chorus  
Seemed to wave up a live air !  
How the cothurns trod majestic  
Down the deep iambic lines,  
And the rolling anapæstic  
Curled like vapour over shrines !

## XI

Oh our Æschylus, the thunderous !  
How he drove the bolted breath  
Through the cloud, to wedge it pon-  
derous  
In the gnarled oak beneath  
Oh, our Sophocles, the royal,  
Who was born to monarch's place—  
And who made the whole world loyal,  
Less by kingly power than grace

## XII

Our Euripides, the human—  
With his droppings of warm tears,  
And his touches of things common,  
Till they rose to touch the spheres !  
Our Theocritus, our Bion,  
And our Pindar's shining goals !—  
These were cup-bearers undying,  
Of the wine that's meant for souls

## XIII

And my Plato, the divine one,—  
If men know the gods aright  
By their motions as they shine on  
With a glorious trail of light !—  
And your noble Christian bishops,  
Who mouthed grandly the last  
Greek

Though the sponges on their hyssops  
Were distent with wine—too weak

## XIV

Yet, your Chrysostom, you praised  
him,  
With his liberal mouth of gold,  
And your Basil, you upraised him  
To the height of speakers old  
And we both praised Heliodorus  
For his secret of pure lies,—  
Who forged first his linked stories  
In the heat of lady's eyes

## xv

And we both praised your Synesius  
For the fire shot up his odes,  
Though the Church was scarce propi-  
tious

As he whistled dogs and gods —  
And we both praised Nazianzen  
For the fervid heart and speech,  
Only I eschewed his glancing  
At the lyre hung out of reach

## xvi

Do you mind that deed of Ate  
Which you bound me to so fast,—  
Reading "De Virginitate,"  
From the first line to the last?  
How I said at ending, solemn,  
As I turned and looked at you,  
That St Simeon on the column  
Had had somewhat less to do?

## xvii

For we sometimes gently wrangled,  
Very gently, be it said —  
Since our thoughts were disentangled  
By no breaking of the thread!  
And, I charged you with extortions  
On the nobler fames of old—  
Ay, and sometimes thought your Por-  
sons  
Stained the purple they would fold

## xviii

For the rest—a mystic moaning  
Kept Cassandra at the gate  
With wild eyes the vision shone in—  
And wide nostrils scenting fate  
And Prometheus bound in passion  
By brute Force to the blind stone,  
Showed us looks of invocation  
Turned to ocean and the sun

## xix

And Medea we saw burning  
At her nature's planted stake,  
And proud Œdipus fate-scorning  
While the cloud came on to break—  
While the cloud came on slow—slower  
Till he stood discrowned, re-  
signed!—

But the reader's voice dropped lower  
When the poet called him BLIND!

## xx

Ah, my gossip! you were older,  
And more learned, and a man!—  
Yet that shadow—the enfolder  
Of your quiet eyelids—ran  
Both our spirits to one level,  
And I turned from hill and lea

And the summer-sun's green revel,—  
To your eyes that could not see

## xxi

Now Christ bless you with the one  
light

Which goes shining night and day!  
May the flowers which grow in sun-  
light

Shed their fragrance in your way!  
Is it not right to remember  
All your kindness, friend of mine,  
When we two sate in the chamber,  
And the poets poured us wine?

## xxii

So, to come back to the drinking  
Of this Cyprus,—it is well—  
But those memories, to my thinking,  
Make a better ænomet,  
And whoever be the speaker  
None can murmur with a sigh—  
That, in drinking from *that* beaker,  
I am sipping like a fly

THE ROMANCE OF THE SWAN'S  
NEST

"So the dreams depart  
So the fading phantoms flee,  
And the sharp reality  
Now must act its part!"  
—Westwood's *Beads from a Rosary*

## I

LITTLE Elsie sits alone  
'Mid the beeches of a meadow,  
'By a stream-side, on the grass,  
And the trees are showering down  
Doubles of their leaves in shadow,  
On her shining hair and face

## II

She has thrown her bonnet by,  
And her feet she has been dipping  
In the shallow water's flow—  
Now she holds them nakedly  
In her hands, all sleek and dripping,  
While she rocketh to and fro

## III

Little Elsie sits alone,—  
And the smile, she softly uses,  
Fills the silence like a speech,  
While she thinks what shall be  
done,—

And the sweetest pleasure chooses,  
For her future within reach

## IV

Little Elsie in her smile  
Chooses "I will have a lover,

Riding on a steed of steeds !  
 He shall love me without guile ,  
 And to *him* I will discover  
 That swan's nest among the reeds

## v

" And the steed shall be red-roan,  
 And the lover shall be noble,  
 With an eye that takes the  
 breath,—  
 And the lute he plays upon,  
 Shall strike ladies into trouble,  
 As his sword strikes men to death

## vi

" And the steed it shall be shod  
 All in silver, housed in azure,  
 And the mane shall swim the wind ,  
 And the hoofs along the sod  
 Shall flash onward and keep measure,  
 Till the shepherds look behind

## vii

" But my lover will not prize  
 All the glory that he rides in,  
 When he gazes in my face  
 He will say, ' O Love, thine eyes  
 Build the shrine my soul abides in,  
 And I kneel here for thy grace '

## viii

" Then ay, then—he shall kneel  
 low,—  
 With the red-roan steed anear him  
 Which shall seem to understand—  
 Till I answer, ' Rise and go !  
 For the world must love and fear him  
 Whom I gift with heart and hand '

## ix

" Then he will arise so pale,  
 I shall feel my own lips tremble  
 With a yes I must not say—  
 Nathless, maiden-brave, ' Fare-  
 well '  
 I will utter, and dissemble—  
 ' Light to-morrow with to-day '

## x

" Then he will ride through the hills  
 To the wide world past the river,  
 There to put away all wrong ,  
 To make straight distorted wills,  
 And to empty the broad quiver  
 Which the wicked bear along

## xi

" Three times shall a young foot-  
 page  
 Swim the stream and climb the  
 mountain

And kneel down beside my feet—  
 ' Lo ! my master sends this gage,  
 Lady, for thy pity's counting !  
 What wilt thou exchange for it ? '

## xii

" And the first time, I will send  
 A white rosebud for a guerdon,—  
 And the second time, a glove  
 But the third time—I may bend  
 From my pride, and answer—' Par-  
 don—  
 If he comes to take my love '

## xiii

" Then the young foot-page will  
 run—  
 Then my lover will ride faster  
 Till he kneeleth at my knee  
 ' I am a duke's eldest son !  
 Thousand serfs do call me master,—  
 But, O love, I love but *thee* ! '

## xiv

" He will kiss me on the mouth  
 Then, and lead me as a lover  
 Through the crowds that praise his  
 deeds  
 And, when soul-tied by one troth,  
 Unto *him* I will discover  
 That swan's nest among the reeds "

## xv

Little Elsie, with her smile  
 Not yet ended, rose up gaily,—  
 Tied the bonnet, donned the  
 shoe—  
 And went homeward, round a mile,  
 Just to see as she did daily,  
 What more eggs were with the  
*two*

## xvi

Pushing through the elm-tree copse,  
 Winding up the stream, light-  
 hearted,  
 Where the osier pathway leads—  
 Past the boughs she stoops—and  
 stops  
 Lo ! the wild swan had deserted—  
 And a rat had gnawed the reeds

## xvii

Elsie went home sad and slow  
 If she found the lover ever,  
 With his red-roan steed of steeds,  
 Sooth I know not ! but I know  
 She could never show him—never,  
 That swan's nest among the reeds !



## LESSONS FROM THE GORSE

"To win the secret of a weed's plain heart"  
LOWELL

## I

MOUNTAIN gorses ever golden,  
Cankered not the whole year  
long!

Do ye teach us to be strong,  
Howsoever pricked and holden  
Like your thorny blooms and so  
Trodden on by rain and snow,  
Up the hill-side of this life, as bleak as  
where ye grow?

## II

Mountain blossoms, shining blossoms!

Do ye teach us to be glad  
When no summer can be had  
Blooming in our inward bosoms?  
Ye, whom God preserveth still,  
Set as lights upon a hill,  
Tokens to the wintry earth that  
Beauty liveth still!

## III

Mountain gorses, do ye teach us  
From that academic chair  
Canopied with azure air,  
That the wisest word man reaches  
Is the humblest he can speak?  
Ye who live on mountain peak  
Yet live low along the ground, beside  
the grasses meek!

## IV

Mountain gorses, since Linnæus  
Knelt beside you on the sod,  
For your beauty thanking God,—  
For your teaching ye should see  
us

Bowing in prostration new!  
Whence arisen—if one or two  
Drops be on our cheeks—O world!  
they are not tears, but dew

## THE DEAD PAN

Excited by Schiller's *Götter Griechenlands* and partly founded on a well known tradition mentioned in a treatise of Plutarch (*De Craculorum Deificatione*), according to which at the hour of the Saviour's agony, a cry of "Great Pan is dead!" swept across the waves in the hearing of certain mariners—and the oracles ceased.

It is in all veneration to the memory of the deathless Schiller, that I oppose a doctrine still more dishonouring to poetry than to Christianity—E B B

## I

Gods of Hellas, gods of Hellas,  
Can ye listen in your silence?

Can your mystic voices tell us  
Where ye hide? In floating islands,  
With a wind that evermore  
Keeps you out of sight of shore?  
Pan, Pan is dead

## II

In what revels are ye sunken  
In old Æthiopia?  
Have the pygmies made you drunken,  
Bathing in mandragora  
Your divine pale lips that shiver  
Like the lotus in the river?  
Pan, Pan is dead

## III

Do ye sit there still in slumber,  
In gigantic Alpine rows?  
The black poppies out of number  
Nodding dripping from your brows  
To the red lees of your wine—  
And so kept alive and fine?  
Pan, Pan is dead

## IV

Or he crushed your stagnant corpses  
Where the silver spheres roll on,  
Stung to life by centric forces  
Thrown like rays out from the sun?  
While the smoke of your old altars  
Is the shroud that round you welters?  
Great Pan is dead

## V

"Gods of Hellas, gods of Hellas,"  
Said the old Hellenic tongue!  
Said the hero-oaths as well as  
Poets' songs the sweetest sung!  
Have ye grown deaf in a day?  
Can ye speak not yea or nay—  
Since Pan is dead?

## VI

Do ye leave your rivers flowing  
All alone, O Naiades  
While your drenched locks dry slow in  
This cold feeble sun and breeze?  
Not a word the Naiads say,  
Though the rivers run for aye  
For Pan is dead

## VII

From the gloaming of the oak-wood,  
O ye Dryads could ye flee?  
At the rushing thunderstroke, would  
No sob tremble through the tree?  
Not a word the Dryads say,  
Though the forests wave for aye  
For Pan is dead

## VIII

Have ye left the mountain places,  
Oreads wild, for other tryst ?  
Shall we see no sudden faces  
Strike a glory through the mist ?  
Not a sound the silence thrills,  
Of the everlasting hills

Pan, Pan is dead,

## IX

O twelve gods of Plato's vision,  
Crowned to starry wanderings —  
With your chariots in procession,  
And your silver clash of wings !  
Very pale ye seem to rise,  
Ghosts of Grecian deities—

Now Pan is dead

## X

Jove ! that right hand is unloaded,  
Whence the thunder did prevail,  
While in idiocy of godhead  
Thou art staring the stars pale !  
And thine eagle, blind and old  
Roughs his feathers in the cold

Pan, Pan is dead

## XI

Where, O Juno, is the glory  
Of thy regal look and tread ?  
Will they lay, for evermore, thee  
On thy dim, straight, golden bed ?  
Will thy queendom all be hid  
Meekly under either lid ?

Pan, Pan is dead

## XII

Ha, Apollo ! Floats his golden  
Hair all mist-like where he stands,  
While the Muses hang enfolding  
Knee and foot with faint wild hands ?  
'Neath the clanging of thy bow,  
Niobe looked lost as thou !

Pan, Pan is dead

## XIII

Shall the casque with its brown iron,  
Pallas' broad blue eyes, eclipse,  
And no hero take inspiring  
From the God-Greek of her lips ?  
'Neath her olive dost thou sit,  
Mars the mighty, cursing it ?

Pan, Pan is dead

## XIV

Bacchus, Bacchus ! on the panther  
He swoons,—bound with his own  
vines !  
And his Mænads slowly saunter,  
Head aside, among the pines,

While they murmur dreamingly —  
“ Evohe—ah—evohe— ! ”

Ah, Pan is dead

## XV

Neptune lies beside the trident,  
Dull and senseless as a stone,  
And Old Pluto deaf and silent  
Is cast out into the sun  
Ceres smileth stern thereat,—  
“ We *all* now are desolate—

Now Pan is dead ”

## XVI

Aphrodite ! dead and driven  
As thy native foam thou art,  
With the cestus long done heaving  
On the white calm of thine heart !  
*At Adoms !* At that shriek  
Not a tear runs down her cheek—

Pan, Pan is dead

## XVII

And the Loves, we used to know from  
One another,—huddled lie,  
Frore as taken in a snow-storm,  
Close beside her tenderly —  
As if each had weakly tried  
Once to kiss her as he died

Pan, Pan is dead

## XVIII

What, and Hermes ? Time enthrall-  
eth

All thy cunning, Hermes, thus,—  
And the ivy blindly crawleth  
Round thy brave caduceus ?  
Hast thou no new message for us,  
Full of thunder and Jove-glories ?

Nay ! Pan is dead

## XIX

Crowned Cybele's great turret  
Rocks and crumbles on her head  
Roar the lions of her chariot  
Toward the wilderness, unfed,  
Scornful children are not mute, —  
“ Mother, mother, walk a-foot—

Since Pan is dead ”

## XX

In the fiery-hearted centre  
Of the solemn universe,  
Ancient Vesta,—who could enter  
To consume thee with this curse ?  
Drop thy grey chin on thy knee,  
O thou palsied Mystery !

For Pan is dead

## XXI

Gods! we vainly do adjure you,—  
 Ye return nor voice nor sign!  
 Not a votary could secure you  
 Even a grave for your Divine!  
 Not a grave, to show thereby,  
*"Here these grey old gods do lie"*  
 Pan, Pan is dead

## XXII

Even that Greece who took your  
 wages,  
 Calls the obolus outworn  
 And the hoarse deep-throated ages  
 Laugh your godships unto scorn—  
 And the poets do disclaim you,  
 Or grow older if they name you—  
 And Pan is dead.

## XXIII

Gods bereaved, gods belated,  
 With your purples rent asunder!  
 Gods discrowned and desecrated,  
 Disinherited of thunder!  
 Now, the goats may climb and crop  
 The soft grass on Ida's top—  
 Now, Pan is dead

## XXIV

Calm, of old, the bark went onward,  
 When a cry more loud than wind,  
 Rose up, deepened, and swept sun-  
 ward,  
 From the piled Dark behind,  
 And the sun shrank and grew pale,  
 Breathed against by the great wail—  
*"Pan, Pan is dead"*

## XXV

And the rowers from the benches  
 Fell—each shuddering on his face,—  
 While departing Influences  
 Struck a cold back through the place,  
 And the shadow of the ship  
 Reeled along the passive deep—  
*"Pan, Pan is dead"*

## XXVI

And that dismal cry rose slowly  
 And sank slowly through the air,  
 Full of spirit's melancholy  
 And eternity's despair!  
 And they heard the words it said—  
*"PAN IS DEAD—GREAT PAN IS DEAD  
 —PAN, PAN IS DEAD"*

## XXVII

'Twas the hour when One in Sion  
 Hung for love's sake on a cross—

When His brow was chill with dying,  
 And His soul was faint with loss,  
 When His priestly blood dropped  
 downward,  
 And His kingly eyes looked throne-  
 ward—

*Then Pan was dead*

## XXVIII

By the love He stood alone in,  
 His sole Godhead rose complete  
 And the false gods fell down moaning,  
 Each from off his golden seat—  
 All the false gods with a cry  
 Rendered up their deity—  
 Pan, Pan was dead

## XXIX

Wailing wide across the islands,  
 They rent, vest-like their Divine!  
 And a darkness and a silence  
 Quenched the light of every shrine,  
 And Dodona's oak swang lonely  
 Henceforth, to the tempest only  
 Pan, Pan was dead

## XXX

Pythia staggered,—feeling o'er her,  
 Her lost god's forsaking look!  
 Straight her eyeballs filmed with  
 horror,  
 And her crispy fillets shook—  
 And her lips gasped through their  
 foam,  
 For a word that did not come  
 Pan, Pan was dead

## XXXI

O ye vain false gods of Hellas,  
 Ye are silent evermore!  
 And I dash down this old chalice,  
 Whence libations ran of yore  
 See! the wine crawls in the dust  
 Wormlike—as your glories must!  
 Since Pan is dead

## XXXII

Get to dust, as common mortals,  
 By a common doom and track!  
 Let no Schiller from the portals  
 Of that Hades, call you back,—  
 Or instruct us to weep all  
 At your antique funeral  
 Pan, Pan is dead

## XXXIII

By your beauty, which confesses  
 Some chief Beauty conquering you,—  
 By our grand heroic guesses,

Through your falsehood, at the  
True,—

We will weep *not* ' earth shall  
roll

Hear to each god's aureole—  
And Pan is dead

xxxiv

Earth outgrows the mythic fancies  
Sung beside her in her youth  
And those debonair romances  
Sound but dull beside the truth  
Phœbus' chariot-course is run  
Look up, poets, to the sun !

Pan, Pan is dead

xxxv

Christ hath sent us down the angels,  
And the whole earth and the skies  
Are illumed by altar-candles  
Lit for blessed mysteries,  
And a Priest's hand, through creation,  
Waveth calm and consecration—

And Pan is dead

xxxvi

Truth is fair should we forego it ?  
Can we sigh right for a wrong ?  
God Himself is the best Poet,  
And the real is His song  
Sing His truth out fair and full,  
And secure His beautiful

Let Pan be dead

xxxvii

Truth is large Our aspiration  
Scarce embraces half we be  
Shame ! to stand in His creation  
And doubt Truth's sufficiency !—  
To think God's song unexcelling  
The poor tales of our own telling—

When Pan is dead

xxxviii

What is true and just and honest,  
What is lovely, what is pure—  
All of praise that hath admonisht,—  
All of virtue, shall endure,—  
These are themes for poets' uses,  
Stirring nobler than the Muses—

Ere Pan was dead

xxxix

O brave poets keep back nothing,  
Nor mix falsehood with the whole !  
Look up Godward ! speak the truth in  
Worthy song from earnest soul !  
Hold, in high poetic duty,  
Truest Truth the fairest Beauty !

Pan, Pan is dead

## HECTOR IN THE GARDEN

I

Nine years old ! The first of any  
Seem the happiest years that  
come  
Yet when I was nine, I said  
No such word !—I thought, in-  
stead,  
That the Greeks had used as many  
In besieging Ilium

II

Nine green years had scarcely  
brought me  
To my childhood's haunted  
spring  
I had life like flowers and bees  
In betwixt the country trees,  
And the sun the pleasure taught me  
Which he teacheth every thing

III

If the rain fell there was sorrow,—  
Little head leant on the pane,  
Little finger drawing down it  
The long trailing drops upon it,—  
And the ' Rain, rain, come to-mor-  
row "  
Said for charm against the rain

IV

Such a charm was right Canidian,  
Though you meet it with a jeer !  
If I said it long enough,  
Then the rain hummed dimly off,  
And the thrush with his pure Lydian,  
Was left only, to the ear

V

And the sun and I together  
Went a-rushing out of doors,  
We, our tender spirits, drew  
Over hill and dale in view  
Glimmering hither, glimmering thi-  
ther,  
In the footsteps of the showers

VI

Underneath the chestnuts dripping,  
Through the grasses wet and fair,  
Straight I sought my garden-  
ground  
With the laurel on the mound,  
And the pear-tree oversweeping  
A side-shadow of green air

VII

In the garden lay supinely  
A huge giant wrought of spade !

Arms and legs were stretched at  
length  
In a passive giant strength —  
And the meadow turf cut finely,  
Round them laid and interlaid

## VIII

Call him Hector son of Priam !  
Such his title and degree  
With my rake I smoothed his  
brow,  
Both his cheeks I weeded through,  
But a rhymers such as I am,  
Scarce can sing his dignity

## IX

Eyes of gentianellas azure,  
Staring winking at the skies,  
Nose of gillyflowers and box,  
Scented grasses put for locks—  
Which a little breeze at pleasure,  
Set a-waving round his eyes

## X

Brazen helm of daffodillies,  
With a glitter toward the light,  
Purple violets, for the mouth,  
Breathing perfumes west and  
south  
And a sword of flashing likes,  
Holden ready for the fight

## XI

And a breastplate made of daisies,  
Closely fitting, leaf by leaf,  
Periwinkles interlaced  
Drawn for belt about the waist  
While the brown bees, humming  
praises,  
Shot their arrows round the chief

## XII

And who knows (I sometimes won-  
dered,)  
If the disembodied soul  
Of old Hector, once of Troy,  
Might not take a dreary joy  
Here to enter—if it thundered  
Rolling up the thunder-roll ?

## XIII

Rolling this way from Troy-ruin,  
In this body rude and rife  
He might enter and take rest  
'Neath the daisies of the breast—  
They, with tender roots renewing  
His heroic heart to life

## XIV

Who could know ? I sometimes  
started

At a motion or a sound !  
Did his mouth speak—naming  
Troy

With an *οτοτοτοτο* ?

Did the pulse of the Strong-hearted  
Make the daisies tremble round ?

## XV

It was hard to answer, often  
But the birds sang in the tree—  
But the little birds sang bold  
In the pear-tree green and old,  
And my terror seemed to soften  
Through the courage of their glee.

## XVI

Oh, the birds the tree, the ruddy  
And white blossoms sleek with  
rain !  
Oh, my garden rich with pansies !  
Oh, my childhood's bright ro-  
mances !  
All revive, like Hector's body,  
And I see them stir again !

## XVII

And despite life's changes—chances,  
And despite the deathbell's toll,  
They press on me in full seeming !—  
Help, some angel ! stay this dream-  
ing !

As the birds sang in the branches  
Sing God's patience through my  
soul !

## XVIII

That no dreamer no neglecter  
Of the present's work unsped,  
I may wake up and be doing,  
Life's heroic ends pursuing  
Though my past is dead as Hector  
And though Hector is twice dead

## FLUSH OR FAUNUS

You see this dog It was but yester-  
day  
I mused forgetful of his presence here  
Till thought on thought drew down-  
ward tear on tear,  
When from the pillow, where wet-  
cheeked I lay  
A head as hairy as Faunus, thrust its  
way  
Right sudden against my face —two  
golden-clear  
Large eyes astonished mine,—a  
drooping ear  
Did flap me on either cheek, to dry  
the spray !

I started first, as some Arcadian,  
 Amazed by goatly god in twilight  
 grove  
 But as my bearded vision closer  
 ran  
 My tears off, I knew Flush, and rose  
 above  
 Surprise and sadness,—thanking the  
 true PAN  
 Who, by low creatures, leads to heights  
 of love

## FINITE AND INFINITE

THE wind sounds only in opposing  
 straits,  
 The sea, beside the shore, man's  
 spirit rends  
 Its quiet only up against the ends  
 Of wants and oppositions, loves and  
 hates,  
 Where worked and worn by passion-  
 ate debates,  
 And losing by the loss it apprehends  
 Its flesh rocks round, and every breath  
 it sends  
 Is ravelled to a sigh All tortured  
 states  
 Suppose a straitened place Jehovah  
 Lord,  
 Make room for rest, around me ! Out  
 of sight  
 Now float me of the vexing land ab-  
 horred !  
 Till, in deep calms of space, my soul  
 may right  
 Her nature,—shoot large sail on  
 lengthening cord,  
 And rush exultant on the Infinite

THE RUNAWAY SLAVE AT  
PILGRIM'S POINT

## I

I STAND on the mark beside the shore  
 Of the first white pilgrim's bended  
 knee,  
 Where exile turned to ancestor,  
 And God was thanked for liberty  
 I have run through the night, my  
 skin is as dark,  
 I bend my knee down on this mark  
 I look on the sky and the sea

## II

O pilgrim-souls, I speak to you !  
 I see you come out proud and slow

From the land of the spirits pale as  
 dew  
 And round me and round me ye go !  
 O pilgrims, I have gasped and run  
 All night long from the whips of one  
 Who in your names works sin and  
 woe

## III

And thus I thought that I would come  
 And kneel here where ye knelt be-  
 fore,  
 And feel your souls around me hum  
 In undertone to the ocean's roar,  
 And lift my black face my black  
 hand,  
 Here, in your names, to curse this land  
 Ye blessed in freedom's evermore

## IV

I am black I am black,  
 And yet God made me, they say  
 But if He did so, smiling back  
 He must have cast His work away  
 Under the feet of His white creatures  
 With a look of scorn,—that the  
 dusky features  
 Might be trodden again to clay

## V

And yet He has made dark things  
 To be glad and merry as light  
 There's a little dark bird sits and  
 sings,  
 There's a dark stream ripples out of  
 sight,  
 And the dark frogs chant in the safe  
 morass  
 And the sweetest stars are made to  
 pass  
 O'er the face of the darkest night

## VI

But *we* who are dark we are dark !  
 Ah God, we have no stars !  
 About our souls in care and cark  
 Our blackness shuts like prison  
 bars  
 The poor souls crouch so far behind,  
 That never a comfort can they find  
 By reaching through the prison-  
 bars

## VII

Indeed, we live beneath the sky,  
 That great smooth Hand of God  
 stretched out  
 On all His children fatherly  
 To bless them from the fear and  
 doubt

Which would be, if, from this low  
place,  
All opened straight up to His face  
Into the grand eternity

## VIII

And still God's sunshine and His  
frost,  
They make us hot, they make us  
cold,  
As if we were not black and lost  
And the beasts and birds, in wood  
and fold,  
Do fear and take us for very men !  
Could the whip poor-Will or the cat of  
the glen  
Look into my eyes and be bold ?

## IX

I am black, I am black !—  
But, once, I laughed in girlish glee,  
For one of my colour stood in the  
track  
Where the drivers drove, and  
looked at me—  
And tender and full was the look he  
gave

Could a slave look so at another slave ?  
I look at the sky and the sea

## X

And from that hour our spirits grew  
As free as if unsold, unbought  
Oh strong enough since we were two,  
To conquer the world, we thought !  
The drivers drove us day by day,  
We did not mind, we went one way  
And no better a freedom sought

## XI

In the sunny ground between the  
canes  
He said " I love you " as he passed  
When the shingle-roof rang sharp  
with the rains,  
I heard how he vowed it fast  
While others shook he smiled in the  
hut

As he carved me a bowl of the cocoa-  
nut,

Through the roar of the hurricanes

## XII

I sang his name instead of a song,  
Over and over I sang his name—  
Upward and downward I drew it  
along

My various notes,—the same, the  
same !

I sang it low, that the slave-girls near

Might never guess from aught they  
could hear,

It was only a name—a name

## XIII

I look on the sky and the sea  
We were two to love, and two to  
pray,—  
Yes, two, O God, who cried to Thee,  
Though nothing didst Thou say  
Coldly Thou sat'st behind the sun !  
And now I cry who am but one,  
How wilt Thou speak to-day ?—

## XIV

We were black, we were black !—  
We had no claim to love and bliss,  
What marvel, if each turned to wrack ?  
They wrung my cold hands out of  
his —  
They dragged him where ?  
I crawled to touch  
His blood's mark in the dust !  
not much,  
Ye pilgrim-souls, though plain  
as this !

## XV

Wrong, followed by a deeper wrong !  
Mere grief's too good for such as I  
So the white men brought the shame  
ere long  
To strangle the sob of my agony  
They would not leave me for my dull  
Wet eyes !—it was too merciful  
To let me weep pure tears and die

## XVI

I am black, I am black !—  
I wore a child upon my breast  
An amulet that hung too slack  
And in my unrest could not rest  
Thus we went moaning, child and  
mother  
One to another, one to another,  
Until all ended for the best

## XVII

For hark ! I will tell you low  
low

I am black, you see,—  
And the babe who lay on my bosom  
so

Was far too white too white  
for me,

As white as the ladies who scorned to  
pray

Beside me at church but yesterday,  
Though my tears had washed a  
place for my knee

## XVIII

My own, own child ! I could not bear  
 To look in his face, it was so white  
 I covered him up with a kerchief  
 there,  
 I covered his face in close and tight  
 And he moaned and struggled, as  
 well might be,  
 For the white child wanted his  
 liberty—  
 Ha, ha ! he wanted his master-  
 right

## XIX

He moaned and beat with his head  
 and feet,  
 His little feet that never grew—  
 He struck them out, as it was meet,  
 Against my heart to break it  
 through  
 I might have sung and made him  
 mild—  
 But I dared not sing to the white-  
 faced child  
 The only song I knew

## XX

I pulled the kerchief very close  
 He could not see the sun, I swear  
 More, then, alive, than now he does  
 From between the roots of the man-  
 go where ?  
 I know where Close ! a child  
 and mother  
 Do wrong to look at one another,  
 When one is black and one is fair

## XXI

Why, in that single glance I had  
 Of my child's face, I tell you  
 all,  
 I saw a look that made me mad  
 The *master's* look, that used to fall  
 On my soul like his lash or  
 worse !—  
 And so, to save it from my curse,  
 I twisted it round in my shawl

## XXII

And he moaned and trembled from  
 foot to head,  
 He shivered from head to foot,  
 Till, after a time, he lay instead  
 Too suddenly still and mute  
 I felt beside a stiffening cold,  
 I dared to lift up just a fold  
 As in lifting a leaf of the mango-  
 fruit

## XXIII

But *my* fruit ha, ha !—there,  
 had been  
 (I laugh to think on't at this  
 hour ! )  
 Your fine white angels who have seen  
 Nearest the secret of God's  
 power,  
 And plucked my fruit to make them  
 wine  
 And sucked the soul of that child of  
 mine  
 As the humming-bird sucks the  
 soul of the flower

## XXIV

Ha, ha, the trick of the angels  
 white !  
 They freed the white child's spirit  
 so  
 I said not a word, but, day and night,  
 I carried the body to and fro,  
 And it lay on my heart like a stone  
 as chill  
 —The sun may shine out as much as  
 he will  
 I am cold, though it happened a  
 month ago

## XXV

From the white man's house, and the  
 black man's hut,  
 I carried the little body on  
 The forest's arms did round us shut,  
 And silence through the trees did  
 run  
 They asked no question as I went,—  
 They stood too high for astonish-  
 ment,—  
 They could see God sit on His  
 throne

## XXVI

My little body, kerchiefed fast,  
 I bore it on through the forest  
 on  
 And when I felt it was tired at last,  
 I scooped a hole beneath the moon  
 Through the forest-tops the angels far  
 With a white sharp finger from every  
 star,  
 Did point and mock at what was  
 done

## XXVII

Yet when it was all done aright,  
 Earth, 'twixt me and my baby,  
 strewed,



All, changed to black earth,  
 nothing white,  
 A dark child in the dark,—ensued  
 Some comfort, and my heart grew  
 young  
 I sate down smiling there and sung  
 The song I learnt in my maiden-  
 hood

## XXVIII

And thus we two were reconciled,  
 The white child and black mother,  
 thus

For, as I sang it, soft and wild  
 The same song, more melodious  
 Rose from the grave whereon I sate !  
 It was the dead child singing that,  
 To join the souls of both of us

## XXIX

I look on the sea and the sky !  
 Where the pilgrims' ships first  
 anchored lay

The free sun rideth gloriously,  
 But the pilgrim-ghosts have slid  
 away

Through the earliest streaks of the  
 morn  
 My face is black, but it glares with a  
 scorn

Which they dare not meet by day

## XXX

Ah !—in their 'stead, their hunter  
 sons !

Ah, ah ! they are on me—they  
 hunt in a ring—  
 Keep off ! I brave you all at once—  
 I throw off your eyes like snakes  
 that sting !

You have killed the black eagle at  
 nest, I think

Did you never stand still in your  
 triumph, and shrink  
 From the stroke of her wounded  
 wing ?

## XXXI

(Man, drop that stone you dared to  
 lift !—)

I wish you who stand there five  
 a-breast,

Each for his own wife's joy and gift,  
 A little corpse as safely at rest

As mine in the mangos !—Yes, but  
 she

May keep live babies on her knee,  
 And sing the song she likes the best

## XXXII

I am not mad I am black  
 I see you staring in my face—  
 I know you staring shrinking back—  
 Ye are born of the Washington-  
 race

And this land is the free America  
 And this mark on my wrist  
 (I prove what I say)

Ropes tied me up here to the flog-  
 ging-place

## XXXIII

You think I shrieked then ? Not a  
 sound !

I hung, as a gourd hangs in the sun  
 I only cursed them all around  
 As softly as I might have done  
 My very own child !—From these  
 sands

Up to the mountains, lift your hands,  
 O slaves, and end what I begun !

## XXXIV

Whips, curses, these must answer  
 those !

For in this UNION, you have set  
 Two kinds of men in adverse rows,  
 Each loathing each and all forget  
 The seven wounds in Christ's body  
 fair,

While He sees gaping everywhere  
 Our countless wounds that pay no  
 debt

## XXXV

Our wounds are different Your  
 white men

Are, after all, not gods indeed,  
 Nor able to make Christs again  
 Do good with bleeding We who  
 bleed

Stand off ! we help not in our loss !  
 We are too heavy for our cross,  
 And fall and crush you and your  
 seed

## XXXVI

I fall, I swoon ! I look at the sky  
 The clouds are breaking on my  
 brain,

I am floated along, as if I should die  
 Of liberty's exquisite pain—

In the name of the white child, wait-  
 ing for me

In the death-dark where we may kiss  
 and agree,

White men, I leave you all curse-free  
 In my broken heart's disdain !

## THE CRY OF THE CHILDREN

"φεῦ, φεῦ, τι προσδέρκεσθε μ' ὀμμασιν,  
τέλνα"—MEDEA

## I

Do ye hear the children weeping, O  
my brothers  
Ere the sorrow comes with years ?  
They are leaning their young heads  
against their mothers,—  
And *that* cannot stop their tears  
The young lambs are bleating in the  
meadows,  
The young birds are chirping in the  
nest,  
The young fawns are playing with  
the shadows,  
The young flowers are blowing  
toward the west—  
But the young, young children, O my  
brothers,  
They are weeping bitterly !—  
They are weeping in the playtime of  
the others,  
In the country of the free

## II

Do you question the young children  
in the sorrow,  
Why their tears are falling so ?—  
The old man may weep for his to-  
morrow  
Which is lost in Long Ago—  
The old tree is leafless in the forest—  
The old year is ending in the frost—  
The old wound, if stricken, is the  
sorest—  
The old hope is hardest to be lost  
But the young, young children, O  
my brothers,  
Do you ask them why they  
stand  
Weeping sore before the bosoms of  
their mothers,  
In our happy Fatherland ?

## III

They look up with their pale and  
sunken faces,  
And their looks are sad to see,  
For the man's hoary anguish draws  
and presses  
Down the cheeks of infancy—  
"Your old earth," they say, "is very  
dreary,"  
"Our young feet," they say, "are  
very weak !

Few paces have we taken, yet are  
weary—

Our grave-rest is very far to seek.  
Ask the aged why they weep, and not  
the children,

For the outside earth is cold,  
And we young ones stand without, in  
our bewildering,  
And the graves are for the old.

## I'

True," say the children, "it may  
happen

That we die before our time  
Little Alice died last year—the grave  
is shapen

Like a snowball, in the rime  
We looked into the pit prepared to  
take her—

Was no room for any work in the  
close clay

From the sleep wherein she lieth  
none will wake her,

Crying, 'Get up, little Alice ! it is  
day'

If you listen by that grave, in sun and  
shower,

With your ear down, little Alice  
never cries !—

Could we see her face, be sure we  
should not know her,

For the smile has time for growing  
in her eyes !

And merry go her moments, lulled  
and stilled in

The shroud, by the kirk-chime !  
It is good when it happens," say the  
children,

"That we die before our time"

## V

Alas, alas, the children ! they are  
seeking

Death in life, as best to have !  
They are binding up their hearts  
away from breaking,

With a cerement from the grave.  
Go out, children, from the mine and  
from the city—

Sing out, children, as the little  
thrushes do—

Pluck your handfuls of the meadow-  
cowslips pretty—

Laugh aloud, to feel your fingers  
let them through !

But they answer, "Are your cow-  
slips of the meadows

Like our weeds anear the mine ?  
 Leave us quiet in the dark of the coal-  
 shadows,  
 From your pleasures fair and fine !

## VI

"For oh," say the children, "we are  
 weary,  
 And we cannot run or leap—  
 If we cared for any meadows, it  
 were merely  
 To drop down in them and sleep  
 Our knees tremble sorely in the  
 stooping—

We fall upon our faces, trying to go,  
 And, underneath our heavy eyelids  
 drooping,

The reddest flower would look as  
 pale as snow  
 For, all day, we drag our burden tiring  
 Through the coal-dark, under-  
 ground—

Or, all day, we drive the wheels of iron  
 In the factories, round and round

## VII

"For, all day, the wheels are droning,  
 turning,—

Their wind comes in our faces —  
 Till our hearts turn —our head with  
 pulses burning,

And the walls turn in their  
 places—

Turns the sky in the high window  
 blank and reeling—

Turns the long light that drops  
 adown the wall—

Turn the black flies that crawl along  
 the ceiling—

All are turning, all the day, and we  
 with all —

And all day, the iron wheels are  
 droning,

And sometimes we could pray,  
 'O ye wheels' (breaking out in a mad  
 moaning)

'Stop ! be silent for to-day !'

## VIII

Ay ! be silent ! Let them hear each  
 other breathing

For a moment, mouth to mouth—  
 Let them touch each other's hands, in  
 a fresh wreathing

Of their tender human youth !  
 Let them feel that this cold metallic  
 motion

Is not all the life God fashions or  
 reveals—

Let them prove their living souls  
 against the notion

That they live in you, or under  
 you O wheels !—

Still, all day, the iron wheels go on-  
 ward,

Grinding life down from its mark,  
 And the children's souls, which God is  
 calling sunward,

Spin on blindly in the dark

## IX

Now tell the poor young children, O  
 my brothers,

To look up to Him and pray—  
 So the blessed One, Who blesseth all  
 the others,

Will bless them another day  
 They answer, "Who is God that He  
 should hear us,

While the rushing of the iron wheels  
 is stirred ?

When we sob aloud, the human crea-  
 tures near us

Pass by, hearing not, or answer not  
 a word,

And *we* hear not (for the wheels in  
 their resounding)

Strangers speaking at the door  
 Is it likely God with angels singing  
 round Him,

Hears our weeping any more ?

## X

"Two words, indeed, of praying we  
 remember,

And at midnight's hour of harm,  
 'Our Father' looking upward in the  
 chamber,

We say softly for a charm<sup>1</sup>  
 We know no other words, except 'Our  
 Father,'

And we think that, in some pause  
 of angels' song,

God may pluck them with the silence  
 sweet to gather

And hold both within His right  
 hand which is strong

<sup>1</sup> A fact rendered pathetically historical by Mr. Horne's report of his commission. The name of the poet of Orion and "Cosmo de' Medici" has, however, a change of associations, and comes in time to remind me that we have some noble poetic heat of literature still,—however we may be open to the reproach of being somewhat geld in our humanity

'Our Father !' If He heard us, He  
would surely  
(For they call Him good and mild)  
Answer, smiling down the steep world  
very purely,  
'Come and rest with me my child'

## XI

"But no!" say the children, weep-  
ing faster,  
"He is speechless as a stone,  
And they tell us, of His image is the  
master

Who commands us to work on  
Go to!" say the children,— "Up in  
Heaven

Dark, wheel-like, turning clouds  
are all we find  
Do not mock us, grief has made us  
unbelieving—

We look up for God, but tears have  
made us blind"

Do you hear the children weeping and  
disproving,

O my brothers, what ye preach?  
For God's possible is taught by His  
world's loving—

And the children doubt of each

## XII

And well may the children weep be-  
fore you!

They are weary ere they run  
They have never seen the sunshine,  
nor the glory

Which is brighter than the sun  
They know the grief of man, without  
his wisdom

They sink in man's despair, with-  
out its calm—

Are slaves without the liberty in  
Christdom—

Are martyrs by the pang without  
the palm—

Are worn as if with age, yet unre-  
trievingly

The blessing of its memory cannot  
keep—

Are orphans of the earthly love and  
heavenly

Let them weep! let them weep!

## XIII

They look up with their pale and  
sunken faces

And their look is dread to see  
For they mind you of their angels in  
their places,

With eyes turned on Deity,—  
"How long" they say, "how long,  
O cruel nation

Will you stand, to move the world,  
on a child's heart—

Stifle down with a mailed heel its  
palpitation,

And tread onward to your throne  
amid the mart?

Our blood splashes upward, O gold-  
heaper,

And your purple shows your  
path!

But the child's sob curses deeper in  
the silence

Than the strong man in his  
wrath!"

## TWO SKETCHES

## H B

## I

THE shadow of her face upon the wall  
May take your memory to the perfect  
Greek

But when you front her, you would  
call the cheek

Too full, sir, for your models, if withal  
That bloom it wears could leave you  
critical,

And that smile reaching toward the  
rosy streak—

For one who smiles so, has no need to  
speak

To lead your thoughts along, as steed  
to stall!

A smile that turns the sunny side o'  
the heart

On all the world as if herself did win  
By what she lavished on an open  
mart—

Let no man call the liberal sweetness,  
sin—

While friends may whisper, as they  
stand apart,

"Methinks there's still some warmer  
place within"

## A B

## II

Her azure eyes, dark lashes hold in  
fee,

Her fair superfluous ringlets, without  
check

Drop after one another down her  
neck,

As many to each cheek as you might  
 see  
 Green leaves to a wild rose This  
 sign outwardly,  
 And a like woman-covering seems to  
 deck  
 Her inner nature For she will not  
 fleck  
 World's sunshine with a finger Sym-  
 pathy  
 Must call her in Love's name ! and  
 then, I know  
 She rises up, and brightens as she  
 should,  
 And lights her smile for comfort, and  
 is slow  
 In nothing of high-hearted fortitude  
 To smell this flower, come near it !  
 such can grow  
 In that sole garden where Christ's  
 brow dropped blood

#### MOUNTAINEER AND POET

THE simple goatherd, between Alp  
 and sky,  
 Seeing his shadow, in that awful tryst,  
 Dilated to a giant's on the mist,  
 Esteems not his own stature larger by  
 The apparent image, but more pa-  
 tiently  
 Strikes his staff down beneath his  
 clenching fist—  
 While the snow-mountains lift their  
 amethyst  
 And sapphire crowns of splendour, far  
 and nigh  
 Into the air around him Learn from  
 hence  
 Meek morals, all ye poets that pursue  
 Your way still onward, up to emin-  
 ence !  
 Ye are not great because creation  
 drew  
 Large revelations round your earl est  
 sense,  
 Nor bright, because God's glory shines  
 for you

#### THE POET

THE poet hath the child's sight in his  
 breast,  
 And sees all *new* What oftenest he  
 has viewed,  
 He views with the first glory Fair  
 and good  
 Pall never on him, at the fairest, best,

But stand before him holy and un-  
 dressed  
 In week-day false conventions such  
 as would  
 Drag other men down from the alti-  
 tude  
 Of primal types, too early dispossessed  
 Why, God would tire of all His  
 heavens, as soon  
 As thou, O godlike, childlike poet,  
 didst,  
 Of daily and nightly sights of sun and  
 moon !  
 And therefore hath He set thee in the  
 midst,  
 Where men may hear thy won-  
 der's ceaseless tune,  
 And praise His world for ever, as  
 thou bidst

#### HIRAM POWERS' GREEK SLAVE

THEY say Ideal Beauty cannot enter  
 The house of anguish On the thresh-  
 hold stands  
 An alien Image with enshackled  
 hands,  
 Called the Greek Slave ! as if the  
 artist meant her  
 (That passionless perfection which he  
 lent her  
 Shadowed, not darkened where the  
 sill expands)  
 To so confront man's crimes in differ-  
 ent lands  
 With man's ideal sense Perce to the  
 centre,  
 Art's fiery finger !—and break up ere  
 long  
 The serfdom of this world ! Appeal,  
 fair stone,  
 From God's pure heights of beauty  
 against man's wrong !  
 Catch up in thy divine face, not alone  
 East griefs but West—and strike and  
 shame the strong,  
 By thunders of white silence, over-  
 thrown

#### LIFE

EACH creature holds an insular  
 point in space  
 Yet what man stirs a finger, breathes  
 a sound,  
 But all the multitudinous beings  
 round

In all the countless worlds, with time  
and place  
For their conditions, down to the  
central base,  
Thrill, haply, in vibration and re-  
bound,  
Life answering life across the vast  
profound,  
In full antiphony, by a common  
grace !—  
I think, this sudden joyaunce which  
illumes  
A child's mouth sleeping unaware  
may run  
From some soul newly loosened from  
earth's tombs  
I think, this passionate sigh, which  
half-begun  
I stifle back, may reach and stir the  
plumes  
Of God's calm angel standing in the  
sun

## LOVE

We cannot live, except thus mutu-  
ally  
We alternate, aware or unaware,  
The reflex act of life and when we  
bear  
Our virtue outward most impulsively,  
Most full of invocation, and to be  
Most instantly compellant, certes,  
there  
We live most life, whoever breathes  
most air,  
And counts his dying years by sun  
and sea  
But when a soul, by choice and con-  
science doth  
Throw out her full force on another  
soul,  
The conscience and the concentra-  
tion both  
Make mere life Love For life in  
perfect whole  
And aim consummated, is Love in  
sooth,  
As nature's magnet-heat rounds  
pole with pole

## HEAVEN AND EARTH

"There was silence in heaven about the space of  
half an hour"—REVELATION VIII 1  
God, Who, with thunders and great  
voices kept

Beneath Thy throne, and stars most  
silver-paced  
Along the inferior gyres, and open-  
faced  
Melodious angels round,—canst in-  
tercept  
Music with music,—yet, at will, hast  
swept  
All back (said he in Patmos placed),  
all back,  
To fill the heavens with silence of the  
waste  
Which lasted half-an-hour !—Lo, I,  
who have wept  
All day and night, beseech Thee, by  
my tears,  
And by that dread response of curse  
and groan  
Men alternate across these hemi-  
spheres,  
Vouchsafe us such a half-hour's hush  
alone,  
In compensation for our noisy years !  
As heaven has paused from song, let  
earth, from moan

## THE PROSPECT

METHINKS we do as fretful children  
do,  
Leaning their faces on the window-  
pane  
To sigh the glass dim with their own  
breath's stain,  
And shut the sky and landscape from  
their view  
And thus, alas ! since God the maker  
drew  
A mystic separation 'twixt those  
twain,  
The life beyond us, and our souls in  
pain  
We miss the prospect which we're  
called unto,  
By grief we are fools to use Be still  
and strong,  
O man, my brother ! hold thy  
sobbing breath,  
And keep thy soul's large window  
pure from wrong,—  
That so, as life's appointment issueth,  
Thy vision may be clear to watch  
along  
The sunset consummation-lights of  
death

HUGH STUART BOYD <sup>1</sup>

## HIS BLINDNESS

GOD would not let the spheric Lights  
 accost  
 This God-loved man, and bade the  
 earth stand off  
 With all her beckoning hills, whose  
 golden stuff  
 Under the feet of the royal sun is  
 crossed.  
 Yet such things were to him not  
 wholly lost,—  
 Permitted, with his wandering eyes  
 light-proof,  
 To catch fair visions, rendered full  
 enough  
 By many a ministrant accomplished  
 ghost,—  
 And seeing, to sounds of softly-  
 turned book-leaves,  
 Sappho's crown-rose, and Meleager's  
 spring.  
 And Gregory's starlight, on Greek-  
 burnished-eyes!  
 Till Sensual and Unsensual seemed  
 one thing,  
 Viewed from one level,—earth's  
 reapers at the sheaves,  
 Scarce plainer than Heaven's angels  
 on the wing!

## HUGH STUART BOYD

## HIS DEATH, 1848

BELoved friend, who living many  
 years  
 With sightless eyes raised vainly to  
 the sun,  
 Didst learn to keep thy patient soul  
 in tune  
 To visible nature's elemental cheers!  
 God has not caught thee to new  
 hemispheres  
 Because thou wast away of this  
 one:—

<sup>1</sup> To whom was inscribed, in grateful affection, my poem of "Cyprus Wine." There comes a moment in life when even gratitude and affection turn to pain, as they do now with me. This excellent and learned man, enthusiastic for the good and the beautiful, and one of the most simple and upright of human beings, passed out of his long darkness through death in the summer of 1848: Dr. Adam Clarke's daughter and biographer, Mrs. Smith (happier in this than the absent), fulfilling a doubly filial duty as she sat by the death-bed of her father's friend and hers.

I think thine angel's patience first was  
 done,  
 And that he spake out with celestial  
 tears,  
 "Is it enough, dear God? then  
 lighten so  
 This soul that smiles in darkness!"  
 Steadfast friend,  
 Who never didst my heart or life  
 misknow,  
 Nor either's faults too keenly appre-  
 hend,—  
 How can I wonder when I see thee go  
 To join the Dead found faithful to  
 the end?

## HUGH STUART BOYD

## LEGACIES

THREE gifts the Dying left me,—  
 Æschylus,  
 And Gregory Nazianzen, and a  
 clock  
 Chiming the gradual hours out like  
 a flock  
 Of stars, whose motion is melodious.  
 The books were those I used to read  
 from, thus  
 Assisting my dear teacher's soul to  
 unlock  
 The darkness of his eyes. Now,  
 mine they mock,  
 Blinded in turn, by tears! now,  
 murmurous  
 Sad echoes of my young voice, years  
 ago,  
 Intoning from these leaves the  
 Grecian phrase,  
 Return and choke my utterance.  
 Books, lie down  
 In silence of the shelf within my gaze!  
 And thou, clock, striking the hour's  
 pulses on,  
 Chime in the day which ends these  
 parting days!

## FUTURE AND PAST

*My future will not copy fair my past.*  
 I wrote that once; and, thinking at  
 my side  
 My ministering life-angel justified  
 The word by his appealing look  
 upcast  
 To the white throne of God, I turned  
 at last,  
 And saw instead there, *thee*,—not  
 unallied

To angels in thy soul ! Then I, long  
tried  
By natural ills, received the comfort  
fast,  
While budding at thy sight, my  
pilgrim's staff  
Gave out green leaves with morning  
dews impearled  
—I seek no copy now of life's first  
half !  
Leave here the pages with long  
musing curled —  
And write me new my future's  
epigraph,  
New angel mine, un hoped for in the  
world !

CONFESSIONS

I

FACE to face in my chamber, my  
silent chamber, I saw her !  
God and she and I only, there, I  
sate down to draw her  
Soul through the clefts of confession  
Speak, I am holding thee  
fast,  
As the angels of resurrection shall do  
it at the last  
" My cup is blood-red  
With my sin," she said,  
" And I pour it out to the  
bitter lees,  
As if the angels of judgment stood  
over me strong at the last,  
Or as thou wert as these ! "

II

When God smote His hands together,  
and struck out thy soul as a  
spark  
Into the organised glory of things,  
from deeps of the dark —  
Say, didst thou shine, didst thou burn,  
didst thou honour the power in  
the form,  
As the star does at night, or the fire-  
fly, or even the little ground-  
worm ?  
" I have sinned," she said,  
" For my seed-light shed  
Has smouldered away from  
His first decrees !  
The cypress praiseth the firefly the  
ground-leaf praiseth the worm  
I am viler than these ! "

III

When God on that sin had pity, and  
did not trample thee straight  
With His wild rains beating and  
drenching thy light found inade-  
quate,  
When He only sent thee the north-  
winds, a little searching and  
chill,  
To quicken thy flame didst  
thou kindle and flash to the  
heights of His will ?  
" I have sinned," she said,  
" Unquickened, unspread,  
My fire dropt down, and I  
wept on my knees !  
I only said of His winds of the north  
as I shrank from their chill,  
What delight is in these ? "

IV

When God on that sin had pity, and  
did not meet it as such,  
But tempered the wind to thy uses,  
and softened the world to thy  
touch,  
At least thou wast moved in thy soul  
though unable to prove it afar,  
Thou couldst carry thy light like a  
jewel not giving it out like a star ?  
" I have sinned," she said,  
" And not merited  
The gift He gives, by the grace  
He sees !  
The mine-cave praiseth the jewel, the  
hill-side praiseth the star —  
I am viler than these ! "

V

Then I cried aloud in my passion,  
unthankful and impotent crea-  
ture,  
To throw up thy scorn unto God  
through the rents in thy nature !  
If He, the all-giving and loving, is  
served so, what then  
Hast thou done to the weak and the  
changing, thy fellows of men ?  
" I have loved," she said  
(Words bowing her head  
As the wind bows the wet  
acacia-trees !)  
" I saw God sitting above me,—but  
I sate among men,  
And I have loved these "



## VI

Again with a lifted voice, like a  
trumpet that takes  
The low note of a viol that trembles,  
and triumphing breaks  
On the air with it, solemn and clear  
‘I have sinned not in this’  
Where I loved, I have loved much  
and well,—I have loved not  
amiss  
Let the living,” she said,  
‘Enquire of the Dead  
In the house of the pale-  
fronted Images,—  
And my own true Dead will answer  
for me, that I have not loved  
amiss  
In my love for all these

## VII

“The least touch of their hands in  
the morning, I keep day and  
night  
Their least step on the stair, still  
throbs through me, if ever so  
light  
Their least gift, which they left to my  
childhood in long ago years,  
Is now turned from a toy to a relic,  
and gazed at through tears  
Dig the snow,” she said,  
“For my churchyard bed,  
Yet I as I sleep, shall not fear  
to freeze,  
If one only of these my beloveds shall  
love me with heart-warm tears,  
As I have loved these’

## VIII

“If I angered any among them, my  
own life was sore,  
If I fell from their presence, I clung to  
their memory more  
Their tender I often felt holy, their  
bitter I sometimes called sweet,  
And whenever their heart has re-  
fused me, I fell down straight at  
\* their feet  
I have loved,” she said,—  
“Man is weak God is dread,  
Yet the weakest man dies with  
his spirit at ease,  
Having poured such an oil of love  
but once on the Saviour’s feet,  
As I lavished on these”

## IX

Go, I cried, thou hast chosen the  
Human and left the Divine!  
Then, at least, have the Human  
shared with thee their wild-berry  
wine?  
Have they loved back thy love, and  
when strangers approached thee  
with blame,  
Have they covered thy fault with  
their kisses, and loved thee the  
same?  
But she wept and said,  
“God, over my head,  
Will sweep in the wrath of His  
judgment seas,  
If indeed He shall deal with me sin-  
ning, but only the same  
And not gentler than these’”

## A SABBATH MORNING AT SEA

## I

THE ship went on with solemn face  
To meet the darkness on the deep,  
The solemn ship went onward  
I bowed down weary in the place,  
For parting tears and present sleep  
Had weighed mine eyelids down-  
ward

## II

Thick sleep, which shut all dreams  
from me,  
And kept my inner self apart  
And quiet from emotion,  
Then brake away and left me free,  
Made conscious of a human heart  
Betwixt the heaven and ocean

## III

The new sight, the new wondrous  
sight!  
The waters round me, turbulent,  
The skies, impassive o’er me,  
Calm in a moonless, sunless light,  
As glorified by even the intent  
Of holding the day-glory!

## IV

Two pale thin clouds did stand upon  
The meeting line of sea and sky,  
With aspect still and mystic  
I think they did foresee the sun,  
And rested on their prophecy  
In quietude majestic,

## v

Then flushed to radiance where they  
stood,

Like statues by the open tomb  
Of shining saints half risen —  
The sun !—he came up to be viewed,  
And sky and sea made mighty room  
To inaugurate the vision !

## vi

I oft had seen the dawnlight run,  
As red wine, through the hills, and  
break

Through many a mist's inurning,  
But here, no earth profaned the sun !  
Heaven, ocean, did alone partake  
The sacrament of morning

## vii

Away with joys fantastical !  
I would be humble to my worth,  
Self-guarded if self-doubted  
Though here no earthly shadows fall,  
I, joying grieving without earth,  
May desecrate without it

## viii

God's Sabbath morning sweeps the  
waves

I would not praise the pageant high  
And miss the dedicature !

I, drawn down toward the sunless  
graves

By force of natural things,—should I  
Exult in only nature ?

## ix

I could not bear to sit alone  
In nature's fixed benignities  
While my warm pulse was  
moving

Too dark thou art, O glittering sun,  
Too strait ye are, capacious seas,  
To satisfy the loving

## x

It seems a better lot than so,  
To sit with friends beneath the  
beech

And call them dear and dearer,  
Or follow children as they go  
In pretty pairs, with softened  
speech

As the church-bells ring nearer

## xi

Love me, sweet friends, this Sabbath  
day

The sea sings round me while ye roll  
Afar the hymn unaltered,

B P

And kneel, where once I knelt, to pray,  
And bless me deeper in the soul,  
Because the voice has faltered.

## xii

And though this Sabbath comes to me  
Without the stoled minister,  
And chanting congregation,  
God's Spirit shall give comfort He  
Who brooded soft on waters drear,  
Creator on creation,

## xiii

He shall assist me to look higher,  
Where keep the saints, with harp  
and song,  
An endless Sabbath morning,  
And on that sea commixed with fire,  
Oft drop their eyelids raised too  
long  
To the full Godhead's burning

## HUMAN LIFE'S MYSTERY

## i

We sow the glebe, we reap the corn,  
We build the house where we may  
rest,

And then, at moments, suddenly,  
We look up to the great wide sky,  
Enquiring wherefore we were born  
For earnest, or for jest ?

## ii

The senses folding thick and dark  
About the stifled soul within,  
We guess diviner things beyond,  
And yearn to them with yearning  
fond,  
We strike out blindly to a mark  
Believed in, but not seen

## iii

We vibrate to the pant and thrill  
Wherewith Eternity has curled  
In serpent-twine about God's seat !  
While, freshening upward to His feet,  
In gradual growth His full-leaved will  
Expands from world to world

## iv

And, in the tumult and excess  
Of act and passion under sun,  
We sometimes hear—oh, soft and far,  
As silver star did touch with star  
The kiss of Peace and Righteousness  
Through all things that are done

## v

God keeps His holy mysteries  
Just on the outside of man's dream !

U

In diapason slow, we think  
To hear their pinions rise and sink,  
While they float pure beneath His  
eyes,  
Like swans adown a stream

## VI

Abstractions, are they, from the forms  
Of His great beauty ?—exaltations  
From His great glory ?—strong pre-  
visions  
Of what we shall be ?—intuitions  
Of what we are—in calms and storms,  
Beyond our peace and passions ?

## VII

Things nameless ! which, in passing  
so,  
Do stroke us with a subtle grace  
We say, " Who passes ? "—they are  
dumb  
We cannot see them go or come,  
Their touches fall soft—cold—as snow  
Upon a blind man's face

## VIII

Yet, touching so, they draw above  
Our common thoughts to Heaven's  
unknown,—  
Our daily joy and pain, advance  
To a divine significance,—  
Our human love—O mortal love,  
That light is not its own !

## IX

And, sometimes, horror chills our  
blood  
To be so near such mystic Things,  
And we wrap round us, for defence,  
Our purple manners, moods of sense—  
As angels, from the face of God,  
Stand hidden in their wings

## X

And, sometimes, through Life's heavy  
swoon,  
We grope for them !—with stran-  
gled breath  
We stretch our hands abroad and try  
To reach them in our agony,—  
And widen, so, the broad life-wound  
Which soon is large enough for  
death

## A CHILD'S THOUGHT OF GOD

## I

THEY say that God lives very high !  
But if you look above the pines,  
You cannot see our God And why ?

## II

And if you dig down in the mines  
You never see Him in the gold,  
Though, from Him, all that's glory  
shines

## III

God is so good, He wears a fold  
Of heaven and earth across His  
face—  
Like secrets kept, for love, untold

## IV

But still I feel that His embrace  
Slides down by thrills through all  
things made,  
Through sight and sound of every  
place,

## V

As if my tender mother laid  
On my shut lids, her kisses' pres-  
sure,  
Half-waking me at night and said  
" Who kissed you through the dark,  
dear guesser ? "

## THE CLAIM

## I

GRIEF sate upon a rock and sighed  
one day  
(Sighing is all her rest !)  
" Wellaway, wellaway, ah wellaway ! "   
As ocean beat the stone, did she her  
breast  
' Ah, wellaway ! ah me ! alas,  
ah me ! "   
Such sighing uttered she

## II

A Cloud spake out of heaven, as soft  
as rain  
That falls on water — " Lo,  
The Winds have wandered from me !  
I remain  
Alone in the sky-waste, and cannot  
go  
To lean my whiteness on the moun-  
tain blue  
Till wanted for more dew

## III

" The Sun has struck my brain to  
weary peace,  
Whereby constrained and pale  
I spin for him a larger golden fleece  
Than Jason's, yearning for as full a  
sail !

Sweet Grief, when thou hast sighed  
to thy mind,  
Gave me a sigh for wind,

IV  
"And let it carry me adown the  
west!"

But Love, who, prostrated,  
Lay at Grief's foot his lifted  
eyes possessed  
Of her full image, answered in  
her stead,

"Now nay, now nay! she shall not  
give away  
What is my wealth, for any Cloud that  
fleeth

Where Grief makes moan,  
Love claims his own!  
And therefore do I lie here night and  
day,  
And eke my life out with the breath  
she sigheth"

### LIFE AND LOVE

I  
Fast this Life of mine was dying,  
Blind already and calm as death,  
Snowflakes on her bosom lying  
Scarcely heaving with the breath

II  
Love came by, and, having known her  
In a dream of fabled lands,  
Gently stooped, and laid upon her  
Mystic chrism of holy hands,

III  
Drew his smile across her folded  
Eyelids, as the swallow dips,  
Breathed as finely as the cold did,  
Through the locking of her lips

IV  
So, when Life looked upward, being  
Warmed and breathed on from  
above,  
What sight could she have for seeing  
Evermore but only Love?

### INCLUSIONS

I  
Oh, wilt thou have my hand, Dear, to  
lie along in thine?  
As a little stone in a running stream,  
it seems to lie and pine!  
Now drop the poor pale hand, Dear  
unfit to plight with thine

II  
Oh, wilt thou have my cheek, Dear,  
drawn closer to thine own?  
My cheek is white, my cheek is worn,  
by many a tear run down  
Now leave a little space, Dear,  
lest it should wet thine own

III  
On, must thou have my soul, Dear,  
commingled with thy soul?—  
Red grows the cheek, and warm the  
hand the part is in the  
whole!  
Nor hands nor cheeks keep separate  
when soul is joined to soul

### INSUFFICIENCY

I  
THERE is no one beside thee, and no  
one above thee,  
Thou standest alone, as the night-  
ingale sings!  
And my words that would praise  
thee, are impotent things  
For none can express thee, though all  
should approve thee!  
I love thee so, Dear, that I only can  
love thee

II  
Say, what can I do for thee?  
weary thee grieve thee?  
Lean on thy shoulder new  
burdens to add?  
Weep my tears over thee  
making thee sad?  
Oh, hold me not—love me not! let me  
retrieve thee!  
I love thee so, Dear, that I only can  
leave thee

### SONG OF THE ROSE

#### ATTRIBUTED TO SAPPHO

If Zeus chose us a King of the flowers  
in his mirth,  
He would call to the rose, and  
would royally crown it,  
For the rose, ho, the rose! is the grace  
of the earth,  
Is the light of the plants that are  
growing upon it!  
For the rose, ho, the rose! is the eye  
of the flowers,  
Is the blush of the meadows that  
reel themselves fair—

Is the lightning of beauty, that strikes  
 through the bowers  
 On pale lovers who sit in the glow  
 unaware  
 Ho, the rose breathes of love! ho, the  
 rose lifts the cup  
 To the red lips of Cypris invoked  
 for a guest!  
 Ho, the rose having curled its sweet  
 leaves for the world  
 Takes delight in the motion its petals  
 keep up,  
 As they laugh to the Wind as it  
 laughs from the west  
*From Achilles Tatius*

## A DEAD ROSE

I  
 O ROSE! who dares to name thee?  
 No longer roseate now, nor soft, nor  
 sweet,  
 But pale, and hard, and dry, as  
 stubble-wheat,—  
 Kept seven years in a drawer—thy  
 titles shame thee

II  
 The breeze that used to blow thee,  
 Between the hedge-row thorns, and  
 take away  
 An odour up the lane to last all day —  
 If breathing now —unsweetened  
 would forego thee

III  
 The sun that used to smite thee,  
 And mix his glory in thy gorgeous  
 urn  
 Till beam appeared to bloom, and  
 flower to burn,—  
 If shining now,—with not a hue  
 would light thee

IV  
 The dew that used to wet thee,  
 And, white first, grow incarnadined,  
 because  
 It lay upon thee where the crimson  
 was,—  
 If dropping now —would darken  
 where it met thee

V  
 The fly that lit upon thee,  
 To stretch the tendrils of its tiny feet  
 Along thy leaf's pure edges after  
 heat —  
 If lighting now —would coldly  
 overrun thee

VI  
 The bee that once did suck thee,  
 And build thy perfumed ambers up  
 his hive,  
 And swoon in thee for joy, till scarce  
 alive —  
 If passing now,—would blindly  
 overlook thee

VII  
 The heart doth recognise thee,  
 Alone, alone! the heart doth smell  
 thee sweet,  
 Doth view thee fair, doth judge thee  
 most complete,—  
 Though seeing now those changes  
 that disguise thee

VIII  
 Yes, and the heart doth owe thee  
 More love, dead rose! than to such  
 roses bold  
 As Julia wears at dances, smiling  
 cold! —  
 Lie still upon this heart—which  
 breaks below thee!

## A WOMAN'S SHORTCOMINGS

I  
 SHE has laughed as softly as if she  
 sighed,  
 She has counted six and over,  
 Of a purse well filled, and a heart well  
 tried—  
 Oh, each a worthy lover!  
 They "give her time," for her soul  
 must slip  
 Where the world has set the groov-  
 ing,  
 She will lie to none with her fair red  
 lip—  
 But love seeks truer loving

II  
 She trembles her fan in a sweetness  
 dumb  
 As her thoughts were beyond re-  
 calling  
 With a glance for *one*, and a glance  
 for *some*,  
 From her eyelids rising and falling,  
 —Speaks common words with a blush-  
 ful air,  
 —Hears bold words, unrepining,  
 But her silence says—what she never  
 will swear—  
 And love seeks better loving

## III

Go, lady 'lean to the night-guitar,  
And drop a smile to the bringer,  
Then smile as sweetly, when he is far,  
At the voice of an in-door singer!  
Bask tenderly beneath tender eyes,  
Glance lightly, on their removing,  
And join new vows to old perjuries—  
But dare not call it loving!

## IV

Unless you can think, when the song  
is done,  
No other is soft in the rhythm,  
Unless you can feel, when left by  
one,  
That all men beside go with him,  
Unless you can know, when unpraised  
by his breath,  
That your beauty itself wants  
proving,  
Unless you can swear—"For life, for  
death!"—  
Oh, fear to call it loving!

## V

Unless you can muse in a crowd all  
day,  
On the absent face that fixed you,  
Unless you can love, as the angels  
may,  
With the breadth of heaven be-  
twixt you,  
Unless you can dream that his faith is  
fast,  
Through behaving and unbehaving  
Unless you can *die* when the dream is  
past—  
Oh, never call it loving!

## A MAN'S REQUIREMENTS

## I

Love me, sweet, with all thou art,  
Feeling, thinking, seeing,—  
Love me in the lightest part,  
Love me in full being

## II

Love me with thy open youth  
In its frank surrender,  
With the vowing of thy mouth,  
With its silence tender

## III

Love me with thine azure eyes,  
Made for earnest granting!  
Taking colour from the skies,  
Can Heaven's truth be wanting?

## IV

Love me with their lids that fall  
Snow-like at first meeting  
Love me with thine heart, that all  
The neighbours then see beating

## V

Love me with thine hand stretched out  
Freely—open-minded,  
Love me with thy loitering foot,—  
Hearing one behind it

## VI

Love me with thy voice that turns  
Sudden faint above me,  
Love me with thy blush that burns  
When I murmur "*Love me!*"

## VII

Love me with thy thinking soul—  
Break it to love-sighing,  
Love me with thy thoughts that roll  
On through living—dying

## VIII

Love me in thy gorgeous airs  
When the world has crowned thee!  
Love me, kneeling at thy prayers,  
With the angels round thee

## IX

Love me pure, as musers do,  
Up the woodlands shady  
Love me gaily, fast, and true,  
As a winsome lady

## X

Through all hopes that keep us brave,  
Further off or nigher,  
Love me for the house and grave,—  
And for something higher

## XI

Thus, if thou wilt prove me, dear,  
Woman's love no fable,  
I will love *thee*—half-a-year—  
As a man is able

## A YEAR'S SPINNING

## I

He listened at the porch that day  
To hear the wheel go on, and on,  
And then it stopped—ran back  
away—  
While through the door he brought  
the sun  
But now my spinning is all done

## II

He sate beside me, with an oath  
That love ne'er ended, once begun,

I smiled—believing for us both,  
What was the truth for only one  
And now my spinning is all done

## III

My mother cursed me that I heard  
A young man's wooing as I spun  
Thanks, cruel mother, for that word,  
For I have, since, a harder known  
And now my spinning is all done

## IV

I thought—O God!—my first-born's  
cry  
Both voices to my ear would drown  
I listened in mine agony—  
It was the *silence*, made me groan  
And now my spinning is all done

## V

Bury me 'twixt my mother's grave,  
Who cursed me on her death-bed  
lone  
And my dead baby's—(God it save!)  
Who, not to bless me, would not  
moan  
And now my spinning is all done

## VI

A stone upon my heart and head,  
But no name written on the stone  
Sweet neighbours! whisper low in-  
stead,

"This sinner was a loving one—  
And now her spinning is all done"

## VII

And let the door ajar remain  
In case he should pass by anon,  
And leave the wheel out very plain  
That he when passing in the sun,  
May see the spinning is all done

## CHANGE UPON CHANGE

## I

Five months ago, the stream did flow  
The lilies bloomed within the sedge,  
And we were lingering to and fro,  
Where none will track thee in this  
snow,

Along the stream, beside the hedge  
Ah sweet, be free to love and go!  
For if I do not hear thy foot,  
The frozen river is as mute,—  
The flowers have dried down to  
the root

And why, since these be changed  
since May,  
Shouldst thou change less than  
they?

## II

And slow, slow, as the winter snow,  
The tears have drifted to mine eyes,  
And my poor cheeks, five months ago,  
Set blushing at thy praises so,  
Put paleness on for a disguise  
Ah, sweet, be free to praise and go!  
For if my face is turned to pale,  
It was thine oath that first did  
fail,—  
It was thy love proved false and  
fraud!  
And why, since these be changed,  
enow,  
Should I change less than thou?

## THAT DAY

## I

I STAND by the river where both of us  
stood,  
And there is but one shadow to darken  
the flood,  
And the path leading to it, where both  
used to pass,  
Has the step but of one, to take dew  
from the grass,—  
One forlorn since that day

## II

The flowers of the margin are many  
to see,  
For none stoops at my bidding to  
pluck them for me,  
The bird in the alder sings loudly  
and long,  
For my low sound of weeping dis-  
turbs not his song,  
As thy vow did that day!

## III

I stand by the river—I think of the  
vow—  
Oh, calm as the place is, vow-breaker,  
be thou!  
I leave the flower growing—the bird,  
unreproved—  
Would I trouble thee rather than  
them my beloved,  
And my lover that day?

## IV

Go! be sure of my love—by that  
treason forgiven,  
Of my prayers—by the blessings they  
win thee from Heaven,  
Of my grief—(guess the length of the  
sword by the sheath's)

By the silence of life, more pathetic  
than death's !  
Go,—be clear of that day !

## A REED

I  
I AM no trumpet, but a reed  
No flattering breath shall from me lead  
A silver sound, a hollow sound !  
I will not ring for priest or king,  
One blast that in re-echoing  
Would leave a bondsman faster  
bound

II  
I am no trumpet, but a reed,—  
A broken reed, the wind indeed  
Left flat upon a dismal shore,  
Yet if a little maid, or child,  
Should sigh within it earnest-mild,  
This reed will answer evermore

III  
I am no trumpet, but a reed  
Go tell the fishers, as they spread  
Their nets along the river's edge,—  
I will not tear their nets at all,  
Nor pierce their hands—if they should  
fall  
Then let them leave me in the sedge

## A CHILD'S GRAVE AT FLORENCE

A A E C  
BORN, JULY, 1848  
DIED, NOVEMBER, 1849

I  
Of English blood, of Tuscan birth,  
What country should we give her ?  
Instead of any on the earth  
The civic Heavens receive her

II  
And here, among the English tombs,  
In Tuscan ground we lay her  
While the blue Tuscan sky endomes  
Our English words of prayer

III  
A little child !—how long she lived,  
By months, not years, is reckoned  
Born in one July, she survived  
Alone to see a second

IV  
Bright-featured, as the July sun  
Her little face still played in  
And splendours, with her birth begun,  
Had had no time for fading

V  
So LILY, from those July hours,  
No wonder we should call her,  
She looked such kinship to the  
flowers  
Was but a little taller

VI  
A Tuscan Lily,—only white  
As Dante, in abhorrence  
Of red corruption, wished aright  
The lilies of his Florence

VII  
We could not wish her whiter  
her  
Who perfumed with pure blossom  
The house !—a lovely thing to wear  
Upon a mother's bosom !

VIII  
This July creature thought perhaps  
Our speech not worth assuming  
She sate upon her parents' laps  
And mimicked the gnat's humming,

IX  
Said " Father," " Mother " !—  
then, left off,  
For tongues celestial fitter  
Her hair had grown just long enough  
To catch Heaven's jasper-glitter

X  
Babes ! Love could always hear and  
see  
Behind the cloud that hid them  
" Let little children come to Me,  
And do not thou forbid them "

XI  
So, unforbidding, have we met,  
And gently here have laid her,  
Though winter is no time to get  
The flowers that should o'erspread  
her

XII  
We should bring pansies quick with  
spring,  
Rose, violet, *rose and lilac*,  
And also, above *all* *things*,  
White lilies for our Lily

XIII  
Nay, more than flowers, this grave  
exacts  
Glad, grateful attestations  
Of her sweet eyes and pretty acts,—  
With calm renunciations



## xiv

Her very mother with light feet  
Should leave the place too earthy,  
Saying, "The angels have thee, sweet,  
Because we are not worthy"

## xv

But winter kills the orange buds,—  
The gardens in the frost are,  
And all the heart dissolves in floods,  
Remembering we have lost her!

## xvi

Poor earth, poor heart!—too weak,  
too weak,  
To miss the July shining!  
Poor heart!—what bitter words we  
speak  
When God speaks of resigning!

## xvii

Sustain this heart in us that faints,  
Thou God the Self-Existent!  
We catch up wild at parting saints,  
And feel Thy Heaven too distant!

## xviii

The wind that swept them out of sin,  
Has ruffled all our vesture  
On the shut door that let them in,  
We beat with frantic gesture,—

## xix

To us, us also—open straight!  
The outer life is chilly—  
Are we, too, like the earth, to wait  
Till next year for our Lily?

## xx

—Oh my own baby on my knees,  
My leaping dimpled treasure,—  
At every word I write like these,  
Clasped close, with stronger pres-  
sure!

## xxi

Too well my own heart under-  
stands  
At every word beats fuller  
My little feet my little hands  
And hair of Lily's colour!

## xxii

—But God gives patience, Love  
learns strength,  
And Faith remembers promise,  
And Hope itself can smile at length  
On other hopes gone from us

## xxiii

Love, strong as Death, shall conquer  
Death,

Through struggle, made more  
glorious

This mother stills her sobbing breath,  
Renouncing, yet victorious

## xxiv

Arms, empty of her child, she lifts,  
With spirit unbereaven—  
"God will not all take back His gifts,  
"My Lily's mine in Heaven!"

## xxv

"Still mine!—maternal rights serene  
Not given to another!  
The crystal bars shine faint between  
The souls of child and mother

## xxvi

"Meanwhile," the mother cries,  
"content!"

Our love was well divided  
Its sweetness following where she  
went,  
Its anguish stayed where I did

## xxvii

"Well done of God, to halve the lot,  
And give her all the sweetness!  
To us, the empty room and cot,—  
To her, the Heaven's completeness

## xxviii

"To us, this grave—to her, the rows  
The mystic palm-trees spring in  
To us, the silence in the house—  
To her, the choral singing!"

## xxix

"For her, to gladden in God's view—  
For us, to hope and bear on!  
Grow, Lily, in thy garden new,  
Beside the Rose of Sharon

## xxx

"Grow fast in Heaven, sweet Lily  
clipped,  
In love more calm than this is,—  
And may the angels dewy-lipped  
Remind thee of our kisses!"

## xxxii

"While none shall tell thee of our  
tears,  
These human tears now falling,  
Till after a few patient years,  
One home shall take us all in!"

## xxxiii

Child, father, mother—who, left  
out?  
Not mother, and not father!—  
And when, their dying couch about,  
The natural mists shall gather,

## XXXIII

Some smiling angel close shall stand,  
In old Correggio's fashion,  
Bearing a LILY in his hand,  
For death's ANNUNCIATION

SONNETS FROM THE  
PORTUGUESE

## I

I THOUGHT once how Theocritus had  
sung  
Of the sweet years, the dear and  
wished for years,  
Who each one in a gracious hand  
appears  
To bear a gift for mortals, old or  
young  
And, as I mused it in his antique  
tongue,  
I saw, in gradual vision through my  
tears,  
The sweet, sad years, the melancholy  
years,  
Those of my own life, who by turns  
had flung  
A shadow across me Straightway  
I was 'ware,  
So weeping, how a mystic Shape did  
move  
Behind me, and drew me backward  
by the hair,  
And a voice said in mastery while I  
strove  
"Guess now who holds thee?"—"Death!" I said But, there  
The silver answer rang, "Not  
Death, but Love"

## II

But only three in all God's universe  
Have heard this word thou hast said,  
Himself, beside  
Thee speaking and me listening!  
and replied  
One of us *that* was God!  
and laid the curse  
So darkly on my eyelids as to amerce  
My sight from seeing thee,—that if  
I had died,  
The deathweights, placed there,  
would have signified  
Less absolute exclusion "Nay" is  
worse  
From God than from all others, O  
my friend!  
Men could not part us with their  
worldly jars,

Nor the seas change us, nor the tem-  
pests bend  
Our hands would touch for all the  
mountain-bars,—  
And, heaven being rolled between us  
at the end,  
We should but vow the faster for the  
stars

## III

Unlike are we, unlike, O princely  
Heart!  
Unlike our uses and our destinies  
Our ministering two angels look sur-  
prise  
On one another, as they strike athwart  
Their wings in passing Thou, be-  
think thee, art  
A guest for queens to social pageant-  
ries,  
With gages from a hundred brighter  
eyes  
Than tears even can make mine, to  
ply thy part  
Of chief musician What hast *thou*  
to do  
With looking from the lattice-lights  
at me,  
A poor, tired, wandering singer >  
singing through  
The dark, and leaning up a cypress  
tree?  
The chrism is on thine head,—on  
mine, the dew,—  
And Death must dig the level where  
these agree

## IV

Thou hast thy calling to some palace  
floor,  
Most gracious singer of high poems!  
where  
The dancers will break footing from  
the care  
Of watching up thy pregnant lips for  
more  
And dost thou lift this house's latch,  
too poor  
For hand of thine? and canst thou  
think and bear  
To let thy music drop here unaware  
In folds of golden fulness at my door?  
Look up and see the casement broken  
in,  
The bats and owlets builders in the  
roof!  
My cricket chirps against thy mando-  
lin

Hush ! call no echo up in further  
proof  
Of desolation ! there's a voice within  
That weeps as thou must sing  
alone, aloof

## v

I lift my heavy heart up solemnly,  
As once Electra her sepulchral urn,  
And looking in thine eyes, I over-  
turn  
The ashes at thy feet Behold and see  
What a great heap of grief lay hid in  
me,  
And how the red wild sparkles dimly  
burn  
Through the ashen greyness If thy  
foot in scorn  
Could tread them out to darkness  
utterly,  
It might be well perhaps But if  
instead  
Thou wait beside me for the wind to  
blow  
The grey dust up, those laurels  
on thine head,  
O my beloved, will not shield thee so,  
That none of all the fires shall scorch  
and shred  
The hair beneath Stand farther off,  
then ! Go

## vi

Go from me Yet I feel that I shall  
stand  
Henceforward in thy shadow  
Nevermore  
Alone upon the threshold of my door  
Of individual life, I shall command  
The uses of my soul, nor lift my hand  
Serenely in the sunshine as before,  
Without the sense of that which I  
forebore,  
Thy touch upon the palm The  
widest land  
Doom takes to part us, leaves thy  
heart in mine  
With pulses that beat double What  
I do  
And what I dream include thee, as the  
wine  
Must taste of its own grapes And  
when I sue  
God for myself, He hears that name  
of thine,  
And sees within my eyes, the tears of  
two

## vii

The face of all the world is changed,  
I think,  
Since first I heard the footsteps of  
thy soul  
Move still oh, still, beside me, as  
they stole  
Betwixt me and the dreadful outer  
brink  
Of obvious death, where I who  
thought to sink  
Was caught up into love and taught  
the whole  
Of life in a new rhythm The cup  
of dole  
God gave for baptism, I am fain to  
drink,  
And praise its sweetness, sweet,  
with thee anear  
The names of country, heaven, are  
changed away  
For where thou art or shalt be, there  
or here,  
And this this lute and song  
loved yesterday,  
(The singing angels know) are only  
dear,  
Because thy name moves right in  
what they say

## viii

What can I give thee back, O liberal  
And princely giver, who hast  
brought the gold  
And purple of thine heart, unstained,  
untold,  
And laid them on the outside of the  
wall  
For such as I to take or leave withal,  
In unexpected largesse ? Am I cold,  
Ungrateful, that for these most mani-  
fold  
High gifts, I render nothing back at  
all ?  
Not so Not cold !—but very poor  
instead !  
Ask God who knows ! for frequent  
tears have run  
The colours from my life, and left so  
dead  
And pale a stuff, it were not fitly  
done  
To give the same as pillow to thy  
head  
Go farther ! Let it serve to trample  
on

## IX

Can it be right to give what I can  
give?  
To let thee sit beneath the fall of  
tears  
As salt as mine, and hear the sighing  
years  
Re-sighing on my lips renunciative  
Through those infrequent smiles  
which fail to live  
For all thy adjurations? O my  
fears,  
That this can scarce be right! We  
are not peers,  
So to be lovers, and I own and  
grieve  
That givers of such gifts as mine are,  
must  
Be counted with the ungenerous  
Out alas!  
I will not soil thy purple with my  
dust,  
Nor breathe my poison on thy  
Venice-glass,  
Nor give thee any love which  
were unjust  
Beloved, I only love thee! let it pass

## x

Yet, love, mere love, is beautiful  
indeed  
And worthy of acceptance Fire is  
bright,  
Let temple burn, or flax! An equal  
light  
I eaps in the flame from cedar-plank  
or weed  
And love is fire and when I say at  
need  
I love thee mark! I love  
thee! in thy sight  
I stand transfigured, glorified aright  
With conscience of the new rays that  
proceed  
Out of my face toward thine There's  
nothing low  
In love when love the lowest  
meanest creatures  
Who love God, God accepts while  
loving so  
And what I feel, across the inferior  
features  
Of what I am, doth flash itself, and  
show  
How that great work of Love en-  
hances Nature's

## XI

And therefore if to love can be desert,  
I am not all unworthy Cheeks as  
pale  
As these you see, and trembling knees  
that fail  
To bear the burden of a heavy heart,—  
This weary minstrel-life that once  
was girt  
To climb Aornus, and can scarce avail  
To pipe now 'gainst the woodland  
nightingale  
A melancholy music! why ad-  
vert  
To these things? O Beloved, it is  
plain  
I am not of thy worth nor for thy  
place  
And yet because I love thee I obtain  
From that same love this vindicating  
grace,  
To live on still in love and yet in  
vain,  
To bless thee yet renounce thee to thy  
face

## xii

Indeed, this very love which is my  
boast,  
And which, when rising up from  
breast to brow,  
Doth crown me with a ruby large-  
enow  
To draw men's eyes and prove the  
inner cost,  
This love even, all my worth, to the  
uttermost  
I should not love withal, unless that  
thou  
Hadst set me an example shown me  
how,  
When first thine earnest eyes with  
mine were crossed,  
And love called love And thus, I  
cannot speak  
Of love even, as a good thing of my  
own  
Thy soul hath snatched up mine all  
faint and weak  
And placed it by thee on a golden  
throne,—  
And that I love (O soul, I must be-  
lieve!)

## xiii

Is by thee only, whom I love alone  
And wilt thou have me fashion into  
speech

The love I bear thee, finding words  
 enough,  
 And hold the torch out, while the  
 winds are rough,  
 Between our faces, to cast light on  
 each ?—  
 I dropt it at thy feet I cannot teach  
 My hand to hold my spirit so far off  
 From myself me that I  
 should bring thee proof  
 In words of love hid in me out of  
 reach  
 Nay let the silence of my womanhood  
 Commend my woman-love to thy  
 belief—  
 Seeing that I stand unwon however  
 wooed,  
 And rend the garment of my life,  
 in brief,  
 By a most dauntless, voiceless fortitude,  
 Lest one touch of this heart convey  
 its grief

## XIV

If thou must love me, let it be for  
 nought  
 Except for love's sake only Do not  
 say,  
 "I love her for her smile her  
 look her way  
 Of speaking gently, for a trick of  
 thought  
 That falls in well with mine, and  
 certes brought  
 A sense of pleasant ease on such a  
 day"—  
 For these things in themselves, Be-  
 loved may  
 Be changed, or change for thee,—  
 and love so wrought,  
 May be unwrought so Neither love  
 me for  
 Thine own dear pity's wiping my  
 cheeks dry,—  
 Since one might well forget to weep  
 who bore  
 Thy comfort long, and lose thy love  
 thereby  
 But love me for love's sake, that  
 evermore  
 Thou mayst love on through love's  
 eternity

## XV

Accuse me not, beseech thee, that I  
 wear

Too calm and sad a face in front of  
 thine,  
 For we two look two ways, and  
 cannot shine  
 With the same sunlight on our brow  
 and hair  
 On me thou lookest, with no doubting  
 care,  
 As on a bee shut in a crystalline,—  
 For sorrow hath shut me safe in  
 love's divine,  
 And to spread wing and fly in the  
 outer air  
 Were most impossible failure, if I  
 strove  
 To fail so But I look on thee  
 on thee  
 Beholding, besides love, the end of  
 love,  
 Hearing oblivion beyond memory  
 As one who sits and gazes from above,  
 Over the rivers to the bitter sea

## XVI

And yet, because thou overcomest so,  
 Because thou art more noble and  
 like a king,  
 Thou canst prevail against my fears  
 and fling  
 Thy purple round me, till my heart  
 shall grow  
 Too close against thine heart, hence  
 forth to know  
 How it shook when alone Why,  
 conquering  
 May prove as lordly and complete a  
 thing  
 In lifting upward as in crushing low  
 And as a soldier struck down by a  
 sword  
 May cry, "My strife ends here," and  
 sink to earth,  
 Even so, Beloved, I at last record,  
 Here ends my doubt ' If thou invite  
 me forth,  
 I rise above abasement at the word  
 Make thy love larger to enlarge my  
 worth

## XVII

My poet, thou canst touch on all the  
 notes  
 God set between His After and Before,  
 And strike up and strike off the  
 general roar  
 Of the rushing worlds, a melody that  
 floats

In a serene air purely Antidotes  
 Of medicated music, answering for  
 Mankind's forlornest uses, thou canst  
   pour  
 From thence into their ears God's  
   will devotes  
 Thine to such ends, and mine to wait  
   on thine !  
 How, Dearest, wilt thou have me for  
   most use ?  
 A hope, to sing by gladly ?       or a  
   fine  
 Sad memory, with thy songs to inter-  
   fuse ?  
 A shade in which to sing       of  
   palm or pine ?  
 A grave, on which to rest from singing ?  
   Choose

## XVIII

I never gave a lock of hair away  
 To a man, Dearest, except this to  
   thee,  
 Which now upon my fingers thought-  
   fully  
 I ring out to the full brown length,  
   and say,  
 "Take it" My day of youth went  
   yesterday,  
 My hair no longer bounds to my foot's  
   glee,  
 Nor plant I it from rose or myrtle-  
   tree,  
 As girls do, any more It only may  
 Now shade on two pale cheeks, the  
   mark of tears,  
 Taught drooping from the head that  
   hangs aside  
 Through sorrow's trick I thought  
   the funeral shears  
 Would take this first, but Love is  
   justified,  
 Take it thou,       finding pure,  
   from all those years,  
 The kiss my mother left here when  
   she died

## XIX

The soul's Rialto hath its merchand-  
   ise,  
 I barter curl for curl upon that mart,  
 And from my poet's forehead to my  
   heart,  
 Receive this lock which outweighs  
   argosies —  
 As purple black, as erst to Pindar's  
   eyes

The dim purpureal tresses gloomed  
   athwart  
 The nine white Muse-brows For  
   this counterpart,  
 Thy bay-crown's shade, Beloved, I  
   surmise,  
 Still lingers on thy curl, it is so black !  
 Thus, with a fillet of smooth-kissing  
   breath,  
 I tie the shadow safe from gliding  
   back,  
 And lay the gift where nothing hir-  
   dereth,  
 Here on my heart as on thy brow,  
   to lack  
 No natural heat till mine grows cold  
   in death

## XX

Beloved, my Beloved, when I think  
 That thou wast in the world a year,  
   ago  
 What time I sate alone here in the  
   snow  
 And saw no footprint, heard the  
   silence sink  
 No moment at thy voice,       but  
   link by link  
 When counting all my chains as if  
   that so  
 They never could fall off at any blow  
 Struck by thy possible hand  
   why, thus I drink  
 Of life's great cup of wonder Won-  
   derful  
 Never to feel thee thrill the day or  
   night  
 With personal act or speech,—nor  
   ever cull  
 Some prescience of thee with the  
   blossoms white  
 Thou sawest growing ! Atheists are  
   as dull,  
 Who cannot guess God's presence out  
   of sight

## XXI

Say over again and yet once over  
   again  
 That thou dost love me Though the  
   word repeated  
 Should seem "a cuckoo-song," as  
   thou dost treat it,  
 Remember never to the hill or plain,  
 Valley and wood, without her cuckoo-  
   strain,

Comes the fresh Spring in all her  
green completed !  
Beloved I amid the darkness greeted  
By a doubtful spirit-voice, in that  
doubt's pain  
Cry speak once more thou  
lovest ! Who can fear  
Too many stars, though each in  
heaven shall roll—  
Too many flowers, though each shall  
crown the year ?  
Say thou dost love me, love me, love  
me—toll  
The silver iterance !—only minding,  
Dear,  
To love me also in silence with thy  
soul

## XXII

When our two souls stand up erect  
and strong  
Face to face silent, drawing nigh  
and nigher  
Until the lengthening wings break  
into fire  
At either curved point,—what bitter  
wrong  
Can the earth do to us, that we  
should not long  
Be here contented ? Think In  
mounting higher,  
The angels would press on us, and  
a pre  
To drop some golden orb of perfect  
song  
Into our deep, dear silence Let us  
stay  
Rather on earth, Beloved,—where  
the unfit  
Contrarious moods of men recoil  
away  
And isolate pure spirits and permit  
A place to stand and love in for a day,  
With darkness and the death-hour  
rounding it

## XXIII

Is it indeed so ? If I lay here dead,  
Wouldst thou miss any life in losing  
mine  
And would the sun for thee more  
coldly shine,  
Because of grave-damps falling round  
my head ?  
I marvelled, my Beloved, when I  
read  
Thy thought so in the letter I am  
thine—

But so much to thee ? Can I  
pour thy wine  
While my hands tremble ? Then my  
soul, instead  
Of dreams of death, resumes life's  
lower range !  
Then love me Love ! look on me  
breathe on me !  
As brighter ladies do not count it  
strange,  
For love, to give up acres and degree,  
I yield the grave for thy sake, and  
exchange  
My near sweet view of Heaven, for  
earth with thee !

## XXIV

Let the world's sharpness like a  
clasping knife  
Shut in upon itself and do no harm  
In this close hand of Love, now soft  
and warm,  
And let us hear no sound of human  
strife  
After the click of the shutting  
Life to life—  
I lean upon thee, Dear, without  
alarm,  
And feel as safe as guarded by a  
charm,  
Against the stab of worldlings who  
if ripe,  
Are weak to injure Very whitely  
still  
The lilies of our lives may reassure  
Their blossoms from their roots !  
accessible  
Alone to heavenly dew that drop not  
fewer,  
Growing straight, out of man's reach,  
on the hill  
God only Who made us rich, can  
make us poor

## XXV

A heavy heart, Beloved, have I borne  
From year to year until I saw thy  
face,  
And sorrow after sorrow took the  
place  
Of all those natural joys as lightly  
worn  
As the stringed pearls each  
lifted in its turn  
By a beating heart at dance-time  
Hopes apace  
Were changed to long despairs,  
till God's own grace

Could scarcely lift above the world  
 forlorn  
 My heavy heart Then *thou* didst  
 bid me bring  
 And let it drop adown thy calmly  
 great  
 Deep being! Fast it sinketh, as a  
 thing  
 Which its own nature doth precipi-  
 tate,  
 While time doth close above it, medi-  
 ating  
 Betwixt the stars and the unaccom-  
 plished fate

## XXVI

I lived with visions for my company  
 Instead of men and women, years ago,  
 And found them gentle mates, nor  
 thought to know  
 A sweeter music than they played to  
 me  
 But soon their trailing purple was not  
 free  
 Of this world's dust,—their lutes did  
 silent grow,  
 And I myself grew faint and blind  
 below  
 Their vanishing eyes Then *thou*  
 didst come to *be*,  
 Beloved, what they *seemed* Their  
 shining fronts,  
 Their songs, their splendours  
 (better, yet the same  
 As river-water hallowed into fountains)  
 Met in thee, and from out thee over-  
 came  
 My soul with satisfaction of all  
 wants—  
 Because God's gifts put man's best  
 dreams to shame

## XXVII

My own Beloved, who hast lifted me  
 From this drear flat of earth where I  
 was thrown,  
 And in betwixt the languid ringlets,  
 blown  
 A life-breath, till the forehead hope-  
 fully  
 Shines out again, as all the angels see,  
 Before thy saving kiss! My own,  
 my own,  
 Who camest to me when the world  
 was gone,  
 And I who looked for only God, found  
*thee!*

I find thee I am safe, and strong,  
 and glad  
 As one who stands in dewless aspho-  
 del  
 Looks backward on the tedious time  
 he had  
 In the upper life so I, with  
 bosom-swell  
 Make witness, here between the good  
 and bad,  
 That Love, as strong as Death, re-  
 trieves as well

## XXVIII

My letters! all dead paper,  
 mute and white!—  
 And yet they seem alive and quivering  
 Against my tremulous hands which  
 loose the string  
 And let them drop down on my knee  
 to-night  
 Thus said he wished to have  
 me in his sight  
 Once as a friend this fixed a day  
 in spring  
 To come and touch my hand a  
 simple thing,  
 Yet I wept for it!—this the  
 paper's light  
 Said, *Dear, I love thee* and I sank  
 and quailed  
 As if God's future thundered on my  
 past  
 This said, *I am thine*—and so its  
 ink has faded  
 With lying at my heart that beat too  
 fast  
 And this O Love thy words  
 have ill availed,  
 If, what this said, I dared repeat at  
 last!

## XXIX

I think of thee!—my thoughts do  
 twine and bud  
 About thee as wild vines about a  
 tree  
 Put out broad leaves, and soon there's  
 nought to see  
 Except the straggling green which  
 hides the wood  
 Yet, O my palm-tree, be it under-  
 stood  
 I will not have my thoughts instead  
 of thee  
 Who art dearer, better! Rather  
 instantly



Renew thy presence ! As a strong  
 tree should,  
 Rustle thy boughs and set thy  
 trunk all bare,  
 And let these bands of greenery  
 which insphere thee,  
 Drop heavily down, burst, shat-  
 tered, everywhere !  
 Because, in this deep joy to see and  
 hear thee,  
 And breathe within thy shadow a new  
 air,  
 I do not think of thee—I am too near  
 thee

## xxx

I see thine image through my tears  
 to-night,  
 And yet to-day I saw thee smiling  
 How  
 Refer the cause ?—Beloved, is it thou  
 Or I ? Who makes me sad ? The  
 acolyte  
 Amid the chanted joy and thankful  
 rite,  
 May so fall flat, with pale insensate  
 brow,  
 On the altar-stair I hear thy voice  
 and vow  
 Perplexed, uncertain, since thou'rt  
 out of sight,  
 As he, in his swooning ears, the  
 choir's Amen !  
 Beloved dost thou love ? or did I  
 see all  
 The glory as I dreamed, and fainted  
 when  
 Too vehement light dilated my ideal  
 For my soul's eyes ? Will that light  
 come again,  
 As now these tears come falling  
 hot and real ?

## xxxI

Thou comest ! all is said without a  
 word  
 I sit beneath thy looks, as children do  
 In the noon-sun, with souls that  
 tremble through  
 Their happy eyelids from an una-  
 verred  
 Yet prodigal inward joy Behold, I  
 erred  
 In that last doubt ! and yet I cannot  
 rue  
 The sin most, but the occasion  
 that we two

Should for a moment stand unmin-  
 istered  
 By a mutual presence Ah, keep near  
 and close,  
 Thou dovelike help ! and, when my  
 fears would rise,  
 With thy broad heart serenely inter-  
 pose !  
 Brood down with thy divine suffi-  
 ciencies  
 These thoughts which tremble when  
 bereft of those,  
 Like callow birds left desert to the  
 skies

## xxxII

The first time that the sun rose on  
 thine oath  
 To love me, I looked forward to the  
 moon  
 To slacken all those bonds which  
 seemed too soon  
 And quickly tied to make a lasting  
 troth  
 Quick-loving hearts, I thought, may  
 quickly loathe,  
 And, looking on myself, I seemed not  
 one  
 For such man's love !—more like  
 an out of tune  
 Worn viol, a good singer would be  
 wroth  
 To spoil his song with, and which,  
 snatched in haste,  
 Is laid down at the first ill-sounding  
 note  
 I did not wrong myself so, but I  
 placed  
 A wrong on *thee* For perfect  
 strains may float  
 'Neath master-hands, from instru-  
 ments defaced,—  
 And great souls, at one stroke, may  
 do and dote

## xxxIII

Yes, call me by my pet-name ! let me  
 hear  
 The name I used to run at, when a  
 child,  
 From innocent play, and leave the  
 cowslips piled,  
 To glance up in some face that proved  
 me dear  
 With the look of its eyes I miss the  
 clear  
 Fond voices, which, being drawn and  
 reconciled

Into the music of Heaven's undefiled,  
 Call me no longer Silence on the  
 bier,  
 While I call God call God !—  
 So let thy mouth  
 Be heir to those who are now exami-  
 mate  
 Gather the north flowers to complete  
 the south,  
 And catch the early love up in the  
 late !  
 Yes, call me by that name,—and I, in  
 truth,  
 With the same heart, will answer, and  
 not wait

## xxxiv

With the same heart, I said, I'll an-  
 swer thee  
 As those when thou shalt call me by  
 my name—  
 Lo, the vain promise ! Is the same,  
 the same,  
 Perplexed and ruffled by life's  
 strategy ?  
 When called before, I told how hastily  
 I dropped my flowers, or brake off  
 from a game,  
 To run and answer with a smile that  
 came  
 At play last moment and went on with  
 me  
 Through my obedience When I  
 answer now,  
 I drop a grave thought,—break  
 from solitude —  
 Yet still my heart goes to thee  
 ponder how  
 Not as to a single good but all my  
 good !  
 Lay thy hand on it, best one, and  
 allow  
 That no child's foot could run fast  
 as this blood

## xxxv

If I leave all for thee, wilt thou  
 exchange  
 And be all to me ? Shall I never  
 miss  
 Home-talk and blessing and the  
 common kiss  
 That comes to each in turn, nor  
 count it strange,  
 When I look up, to drop on a new  
 range  
 Of walls and floors another  
 home than this ?

Nay, wilt thou fill that place by me  
 which is  
 Filled by dead eyes too tender to  
 know change ?  
 That's hardest ! If to conquer love  
 has tried,  
 To conquer grief tries more as  
 all things prove,  
 For grief indeed is love and grief  
 beside  
 Alas ! I have grieved so I am hard to  
 love—  
 Yet love me—wilt thou ? Open  
 thine heart wide,  
 And fold within the wet wings of  
 thy dove

## xxxvi

When we met first and loved, I did  
 not build  
 Upon the event with marble Could it  
 mean  
 To last, a love set pendulous between  
 Sorrow and sorrow ? Nay, I rather  
 thrilled,  
 Distrusting every light that seemed  
 to gild  
 The onward path, and feared to  
 overlean  
 A finger even And, though I have  
 grown serene  
 And strong since then, I think that  
 God has willed  
 A still renewable fear O love,  
 O troth  
 Lest these enclasped hands should  
 never hold,  
 This mutual kiss drop down between  
 us both  
 As an unowned thing, once the lips  
 being cold  
 And Love be false ! if he, to keep one  
 oath,  
 Must lose one joy by his life's star  
 foretold

## xxxvii

Pardon, oh, pardon, that my soul  
 should make  
 Of all that strong divineness which I  
 know  
 For thine and thee, an image only so  
 Formed of the sand, and fit to shift  
 and break  
 It is that distant years which did not  
 take  
 Thy sovranly, recoiling with a blow,

Have forced my swimming brain to  
undergo  
Their doubt and dread, and blindly  
to forsake  
Thy purity of likeness, and distort  
Thy worthiest love with worthless  
counterfeit  
As if a shipwrecked Pagan, safe in  
port,  
His guardian sea-god to commemorate,  
Should set a sculptured porpoise, gills  
a-snort,  
And vibrant tail, within the temple-  
gate

## XXXVIII

First time he kissed me, he but only  
kissed  
The fingers of this hand wherewith I  
write,  
And ever since it grew more clean  
and white,  
Slow to world-greetings      quick  
with its "Oh, list,"  
When the angels speak      A ring of  
amethyst  
I could not wear here plainer to my  
sight,  
Than that first kiss      The second  
passed in height  
The first, and sought the forehead,  
and half missed,  
Half falling on the hair      O beyond  
meed!  
That was the chrism of love, which  
love's own crown,  
With sanctifying sweetness, did pre-  
cede  
The third upon my lips was folded  
down  
In perfect, purple state! since when,  
indeed,  
I have been proud and said, "My  
Love, my own"

## XXXIX

Because thou hast the power and  
own'st the grace  
To look through and behind this mask  
of me,  
(Against which, years have beat thus  
blanchingly  
With their rains!) and behold my  
soul's true face,  
The dim and weary witness of life's  
race,—  
Because thou hast the faith and love  
to see,

Through that same soul's distracting  
lethargy,  
The patient angel waiting for his  
place  
In the new Heavens,—because nor  
sin nor woe,  
Nor God's infliction, nor death's  
neighbourhood,  
Nor all which others viewing, turn  
to go,  
Nor all which makes me tired of all,  
self-v ewed,  
Nothing repels thee,      Dearest,  
teach me so  
To pour out gratitude, as thou dost,  
good!

## XL

Oh yes! they love through all this  
world of ours!  
I will not gainsay love, called love  
forsooth  
I have heard love talked in my early  
youth,  
And since, not so long back but that  
the flowers  
Then gathered, smell still      Mussul-  
mans and Giaours  
Throw kerchiefs at a smile, and have  
no ruth  
For any weeping      Polypheme's white  
tooth  
Slips on the nut, if after frequent  
showers  
The shell is over-smooth,—and not so  
much  
Will turn the thing called love, aside  
to hate,  
Or else to oblivion      But thou art not  
such  
A lover, my Beloved! thou canst wait  
Through sorrow and sickness, to  
bring souls to touch,  
And think it soon when others cry,  
"Too late"

## XLI

I thank all who have loved me in  
their hearts,  
With thanks and love from mine  
Deep thanks to all  
Who paused a little near the prison-  
wall,  
To hear my music in its louder parts,  
Ere they went onward, each one to  
the mart's  
Or temple's occupation, beyond call

But thou, who in my voice's sink and  
fall,  
When the sob took it, thy divinest  
Art's  
Own instrument didst drop down at  
thy foot,  
To hearken what I said between my  
tears,  
Instruct me how to thank thee!—  
Oh, to shoot  
My soul's full meaning into future  
years,  
That *they* should lend it utterance,  
and salute  
Love that endures, with Life that  
disappears!

## XLII

How do I love thee? Let me count  
the ways  
I love thee to the depth and breadth  
and height  
My soul can reach, when feeling out  
of sight  
For the ends of Being and Ideal  
Grace  
I love thee to the level of every day's  
Most quiet need, by sun and candle-  
light  
I love thee freely, as men strive for  
Right,  
I love thee purely, as they turn from  
Praise  
I love thee with the passion put to use  
In my old griefs, and with my child-  
hood's faith,  
I love thee with a love I seemed to  
lose  
With my lost saints,—I love thee  
with the breath,  
Smiles, tears, of all my life!—and, if  
God choose,  
I shall but love thee better after  
death

## XLIII

Beloved, thou hast brought me  
many flowers  
Plucked in the garden, all the summer  
through  
And winter, and it seemed as if they  
grew  
In this close room nor missed the  
sun and showers  
So, in the like name of that love of  
ours,  
Take back these thoughts which  
here unfolded too,

And which on warm and cold days  
I withdrew  
From my heart's ground Indeed,  
those beds and bowers  
Be overgrown with bitter weeds and  
rue,  
And wait thy weeding, yet here's  
eglantine,  
Here sivy!—take them, as I used to do  
Thy flowers, and keep them where  
they shall not pine,  
Instruct thine eyes to keep their  
colours true,  
And tell thy soul, their roots are left  
in mine

## CASA GUIDI WINDOWS

(1851)

THIS Poem contains the impressions of  
the writer upon events in Tuscany of  
which she was a witness "From a  
window," the critic may demur She  
bows to the objection in the very title of  
her work No continuous narrative, nor  
exposition of political philosophy, is  
attempted by her It is a simple story of  
personal impressions, whose only value  
is in the intensity with which they were  
received, as proving her warm affection  
for a beautiful and unfortunate country,  
and the sincerity with which they are  
related, as indicating her own good faith  
and freedom from all partisanship

Of the two parts of this Poem, the  
first was written nearly three years ago,  
while the second resumes the actual  
situation of 1851 The discrepancy  
between the two parts is a sufficient  
guarantee to the public of the truthfulness  
of the writer, who, though she  
certainly escaped the epidemic "falling  
sickness" of enthusiasm for Pio Nono,  
takes shame upon herself that she be-  
lieved, like a woman, some royal oaths,  
and lost sight of the probable conse-  
quences of some obvious popular defects  
If the discrepancy should be painful to  
the reader, let him understand that to  
the writer it has been more so But  
such discrepancy we are called upon to  
accept at every hour by the conditions  
of our nature the discrepancy  
between aspiration and performance,  
between faith and disillusion, between  
hope and fact

"O trusted broken prophecy,  
O richest fortune sourly crost,  
Born for the future, to the future lost!"  
Nay, not lost to the future in this case  
The future of Italy shall not be disin-  
herited

FLORENCE, 1851

## PART I

## I

I HEARD last night a little child go  
singing  
'Neath Casa Guidi windows, by the  
church  
"O bella libertà, O bella!" stringing  
The same words still on notes he  
went in search  
So high for you concluded the up-  
springing  
Of such a nimble bird to sky from  
perch  
Must leave the whole bush in a  
tremble green  
And that the heart of Italy must  
beat,  
While such a voice had leave to rise  
serene  
'Twixt church and palace of a  
Florence street!—  
A little child, too, who not long had  
been  
By mother's finger steadied on his  
feet,  
And still "*O bella libertà*" he sang

## II

Then I thought, musing, of the in-  
numerable  
Sweet songs which for this Italy  
outrang  
From older singers' lips, who sang not  
thus  
Exultingly and purely, yet, with  
pang  
Sheathed into music, touched the  
heart of us  
So finely that the pity scarcely  
pained!  
I thought how Filicaja led on others,  
Bewailers for their Italy enchained,  
And how they called her childless  
among mothers,  
Widow of empires, ay, and scarce  
refrained  
Cursing her beauty to her face, as  
brothers  
Might a shamed sister,—“Had she  
been less fair  
She were less wretched,”—how, evok-  
ing so  
From congregated wrong and  
heaped despair  
Of men and women writhing under  
blow,

Harrowed and hideous in their  
filthy lair,  
A personating Image, wherein woe  
Was wrapt in beauty from offend-  
ing much,  
They called it Cybele, or Niobe,  
Or laid it corpse-like on a bier for  
such,  
Where the whole world might drop  
for Italy  
Those cadenced tears which burn  
not where they touch—  
“Juliet of nations, canst thou die as  
we?”  
And was the violet crown that  
crowned thy head  
So over large, though new buds made  
it rough,  
It slipped down and across thine  
eyelids dead  
O sweet, fair Juliet?”—Of such songs  
enough,  
Too many of such complaints! Be-  
hold instead,  
Void at Verona, Juliet's marble  
trough!  
And void as that is, are all images  
Men set between themselves and  
actual wrong  
To catch the weight of pity meet  
the stress  
Of conscience, though 'tis easier to  
gaze long  
On personations, masks, and effi-  
gies,  
Than to see live weak creatures  
crushed by strong

III

For me who stand in Italy to-day,  
Where worthier poets stood and sang  
before,  
I kiss their footsteps, yet their  
words gainsay  
I can but muse in hope upon this  
shore  
Of golden Arno, as it shoots away  
Straight through the heart of Flor-  
ence, 'neath the four  
Bent bridges, seeming to strain off  
like bows,  
And tremble, while the arrowy under-  
tide  
Shoots on and cleaves the marble  
as it goes,  
And strikes up palace-walls on either  
side,

And froths the cornice out in glittering rows,  
 With doors and windows quaintly multiplied,  
 And terrace-sweeps, and gazers upon all,  
 By whom if flower or kerchief were thrown out,  
 From any lattice there, the same would fall  
 Into the river underneath no doubt,—  
 It runs so close and fast twixt wall and wall  
 How beautiful ! The mountains from without  
 Listen in silence for the word said next,  
 (What word will men say ?) here where Giotto planted  
 His campanile, like an unperplexed  
 Question to Heaven, concerning the things granted  
 To a great people, who, being greatly vexed  
 In act, in aspiration keep undaunted !  
 (What word says God ?) The sculptor's "Night" and "Day"  
 And "Dawn" and "Twilight," wait in marble scorn,  
 Like dogs couched on a dunghill, on the clay  
 From whence the Medicean stamp's outworn,—  
 The final putting off of all such sway  
 By all such hands, and freeing of the unborn  
 In Florence, and the world o' tside his Florence  
 That's Michel Angelo ! his statues wait  
 In the small chapel of the dim St Lawrence !  
 'Day's' eyes are breaking bold and passionate  
 Over his shoulder, and will flash abhorrence  
 On darkness, and with level looks meet fate,  
 When once loose from that marble film of theirs  
 The "Night" has wild dreams in her sleep, the "Dawn"  
 Is haggard as the sleepless "Twilight" wears  
 A sort of horror as the veil withdrawn

'Twixt the artist's soul and works had left them heirs  
 Of the deep thoughts which would not quail nor fawn,  
 His angers and contempts, his nope and love,  
 For not without a meaning did he place  
 Princely Urbino on the seat above  
 With everlasting shadow on his face,  
 While the slow dawns and twilights disapprove  
 The ashes of his long-extinguished race,  
 Which never shall clog more the feet of men

## IV

I do believe, divinest Angelo,  
 That winter-hour, in Via Larga, when  
 Thou wert commanded to build up in snow  
 Some marvel of thine art, which straight again  
 Dissolved beneath the sun's Italian glow  
 While thine eyes, still broad with the plastic passion,  
 Thawed, too in drops of wounded manhood, since,  
 Mocking alike thine art and indignation,  
 Laughed at the palace-window the new prince,  
 "Aha ! this genius needs for exaltation,  
 When all's said, and howe'er the proud may wince,  
 A little marble from our princely mines !"  
 I do believe that hour thou laughedst too  
 For the whole world and for thy Florentines,  
 After those few tears—which were only few !  
 That as, beneath the sun, the grand white lines  
 Of thy snow-statue trembled and withdrew,—  
 The head, erect as Jove's, being palsied first,  
 The eyelids flattened, the full brow turned blank,—  
 When the right hand, upraised as if it cursed,

Dropped, a mere snowball, and the  
 people sank  
 Their voices, though a louder  
 laughter burst  
 From the window,—Michel, then, thy  
 soul could thank  
 God and the prince, for promise  
 and presage,  
 And laugh the laugh back, I think  
 verily,  
 Thine eyes being purged by tears  
 of righteous rage,  
 To read a wrong into a prophecy  
 And measure a true great man's  
 heritage  
 Against a mere Grand-duke's pos-  
 terity  
 I think thy soul said then, "I do  
 not need  
 A principedom and its quarries, after all,  
 For if I write, paint, carve a word,  
 indeed,  
 On book or board or dust, on floor or  
 wall,  
 The same is kept of God Who tak-  
 eth heed  
 That not a letter of the meaning fall,  
 Or ere it touch and teach His world's  
 deep heart,  
 Outlasting, therefore, all your lord-  
 ships, Sir !  
 So keep your stone, beseech you,  
 for your part,  
 To cover up your grave-place and  
 refer  
 The proper titles ! I live by my art !  
 The thought I threw into this snow  
 shall stir  
 This gazing people when their gaze  
 is done,  
 And the tradition of your act and  
 mine,  
 When all the snow is melted in the  
 sun  
 Shall gather up, for unborn men, a  
 sign  
 Of what is the true principedom ! ay,  
 and none  
 Shall laugh that day, except the  
 drunk with wine "

## v

Amen, great Angelo ! the day is  
 come,  
 And, if we laugh not on it, shall we  
 weep ?

Much more we shall not Through  
 the mournful hum  
 Of poets sonneteering in their sleep  
 'Neath the pale olives, which  
 droop, tickling some  
 On chin and forehead from a dream  
 too deep,—  
 Through all that drowsy hum of  
 voices smooth,  
 The hopeful bird mounts carolling  
 from brake,  
 The hopeful child, with leaps to  
 catch his growth,  
 Sings open-eyed for liberty's sweet  
 sake,  
 And I, who am a singer too, for-  
 sooth,  
 Prefer to sing with these who are  
 awake,  
 With birds, with babes, with men  
 who will not fear  
 The baptism of the holy morning  
 dew,  
 (And many of such wakers now are  
 here,  
 Complete in their anointed manhood,  
 who  
 Will greatly dare and greater per-  
 severe !)  
 Than join those old thin voices with  
 my new,  
 And sigh for Italy with some safe  
 sigh  
 Cooped up in music 'twixt an "oh"  
 and "ah" —  
 Nay hand in hand with that young  
 child will I  
 Rather go singing "*Bella liberta*,"  
 Than, with those poets, croon the  
 dead or cry  
 "*Se tu men bella fossi, Italia !*"

## vi

"Less wretched if less fair," per-  
 haps a truth  
 Is so far plain in this—that Italy,  
 Long trammelled with the purple  
 of her youth  
 Against her age's due activity  
 Sate still upon her graves, without  
 the ruth  
 Of death, but also without energy  
 And hope of life "What's Italy?"  
 men ask  
 And others answer, "Virgil, Cicero,  
 Catullus, Cæsar" And what more ?  
 to task

The memory closer—"Why, Boccaccio

Dante, Petrarca,"—and if still the flask

Appears to yield its wine by drops too slow—

"Angelo, Raffael, Pergolese"—all Whose strong hearts beat through stone or charged, again, Cloth-threads with fire of souls electrical

Or broke up heaven for music What more then?

Why, then, no more The chapel's last beads fall

In naming the last saintship within ken,

And, after that, none prayeth in the land

Alas, thus Italy has too long swept Heroic ashes up for hour-glass sand, Of her own past, impassioned nympholept!

Consenting to be nailed by the hand

To the same bay-tree under which she stepped

A queen of old, and plucked a leafy branch,

And licensing the world too long, indeed,

To use her broad phylacteries to staunch

And stop her bloody lips, which took no heed

How one quick breath would draw an avalanche

Of living sons around her, to succeed The vanished generations Could she count

Those oil-eaters, with large, live, mobile mouths

Agape for macaroni, in the amount Of consecrated heroes of her south's

Bright rosary? The pitcher at the fount,

The gift of gods, being broken,—why, one loathes

To let the ground-leaves of the place confer

A natural bowl And thus, she chose to seem

No nation, but the poet's pensioner,

With alms from every land of song and dream,

While her own pipes sweetly piped of her

Until their proper breaths, in that extreme

Of sighing, split the reed on which they played!

Of which, no more but never say "no more"

To Italy! Her memories undimmed

Say rather "evermore"—her graves implore

Her future to be strong and not afraid—

Her very statues send their looks before!

# VII

We do not serve the dead—the past is past!

God lives, and lifts His glorious mornings up

Before the eyes of men, who wake at last,

And put away the meats they used to sup

And on the dry dust of the ground outcast

The dregs remaining of the ancient cup

And turn to wakeful prayer and worthy act

The dead, upon their awful 'vantage ground—

The sun not in their faces,—shall abstract

No more our strength we will not be discrowned

Through treasuring their crowns, nor deign transact

A barter of the present, in a sound, For what was counted good in foregone days

O Dead, ye shall no longer cling to us

With your stiff hands of desecrating praise,

And hold us backward by the garment thus

To stay and laud you in long virelays!

Still no! we will not be oblivious Of our own lives, because ye lived before

Nor of our acts, because ye acted well—

We thank you that ye first unlatched the door—



We will not make it inaccessible  
 By thankings in the doorway any  
 more  
 But will go onward to extinguish hell  
 With our fresh souls, our younger  
 hope, and God's  
 Maturity of purpose    Soon shall we  
 Be the dead too! and, that our  
 periods  
 Of life may round themselves to  
 memory  
 As smoothly as on our graves the  
 funeral-sods  
 We must look to it to excel as ye,  
 And bear our age as far, unlimited  
 By the last sea-mark! so, to be in-  
 voked  
 By future generations, as the Dead

## VIII

'Tis true that when the dust of death  
 has choked  
 A great man's voice, the common  
 words he said  
 Turn oracles,—the meanings which  
 he yoked  
 Like horses, draw like griffins!—  
 this is true  
 And acceptable    Also I desire,  
 When men make record, with the  
 flowers they strew,  
 "Savonarola's soul went out in fire  
 Upon our Grand-duke's piazza, and  
 burned through  
 A moment first, or ere he did expire,  
 The veil betwixt the right and  
 wrong, and showed  
 How near God sate and judged the  
 judges there,—"  
 Desire, upon the pavement over-  
 strewn,  
 To cast my violets with as reverent  
 care,  
 And prove that all the winters  
 which have snowed  
 Cannot snow out the scent, from  
 stones and air,  
 Of a sincere man's virtues    This  
 was he,  
 Savonarola, who, while Peter sank  
 With his whole boat-load, called  
 courageously  
 "Wake Christ, wake Christ!"—who,  
 having tried the tank  
 Of the church-waters used for bap-  
 tistry

Ere Luther lived to spill them, said  
 they stank!  
 Who also, by a princely deathbed,  
 cried  
 "Loose Florence, or God will not loose  
 thy soul,"  
 While the Magnificent fell back and  
 died  
 Beneath the star-looks, shooting  
 from the cowl,  
 Which turned to wormwood bitter-  
 ness the wide  
 Deep sea of his ambitions    It were  
 foul  
 To grudge Savonarola and the rest  
 Their violets! rather pay them quick  
 and fresh!  
 The emphasis of death makes mani-  
 fest  
 The eloquence of action in our flesh,  
 And men who, living, were but  
 dimly guessed,  
 When once free from their life's  
 entangled mesh,  
 Show their full length in graves, or  
 even indeed  
 Exaggerate their stature, in the flat,  
 To noble admirations which ex-  
 ceed  
 Nobly, nor sin in such excess    For  
 that  
 Is wise and righteous    We, who  
 are the seed  
 Of buried creatures, if we turned and  
 spate  
 Upon our antecedents, we were vile  
 Bring violets rather! If these had  
 not walked  
 Their furlong, could we hope to  
 walk our mile?  
 Therefore bring violets! Yet if we,  
 self-baulked,  
 Stand still a-strewing violets all the  
 while  
 These had as well not moved, our-  
 selves not talked  
 Of these    So rise up with a cheer-  
 ful smile,  
 And, having strewn the violets, reap  
 the corn,  
 And, having reaped and garnered,  
 bring the plough  
 And draw new furrows 'neath the  
 healthy morn,  
 And plant the great Hereafter in  
 this Now

## IX

Of old 'twas so    How step by step  
           was worn,  
 As each man gained on each,  
           securely !—how  
 Each by his own strength sought his  
           own ideal,  
 The ultimate Perfection leaning  
           bright  
 From out the sun and stars, to bless  
           the leal  
 And earnest search of all for Fair  
           and Right,  
 Through the dim forms, by earth  
           accounted real !  
 Because old Jubal blew into delight  
 The souls of men, with clear-piped  
           melodies,  
 What if young Asaph were content  
           at most  
 To draw from Jubal's grave, with  
           listening eyes,  
 Traditionary music's floating ghost  
 Into the grass-grown silence ? were it  
           wise ?  
 Is it not wiser, Jubal's breath being  
           lost,  
 That Miriam clashed her cymbals to  
           surprise  
 The sun between her white arms  
           flung apart,  
 With new, glad, golden sounds ? that  
           David's strings  
 O'erflowed his hand with music  
           from his heart ?  
 So harmony grows full from many  
           springs,  
 And happy accident turns holy art

## X

O enter in your Florence wanderings,  
 Santa Maria Novella church You  
           pass  
 The left stair, where, at plague-time,  
           Macchiavel  
 Saw one with set fair face as in a  
           glass,  
 Dressed out against the fear of death  
           and hell,  
 Rustling her silks in pauses of the  
           mass  
 To keep the thought off how her hus-  
           band fell,  
 When she left home, stark dead  
           across her feet—

The stair leads up to what Orcagna  
           gave  
 Of Dante's demons, but you, pass-  
           ing it,  
 Ascend the right stair of the farther  
           nave  
 To muse in a small chapel scarcely  
           lit  
 By Cimabue's "Virgin" Bright and  
           brave,  
 That picture was accounted, mark,  
           of old !  
 A king stood bare before its sovran  
           grace  
 A reverent people shouted to be-  
           hold  
 The picture not the king, and even  
           the place  
 Containing such a miracle, grew  
           bold,  
 Named the Glad Borgo from that  
           beauteous face,  
 Which thrilled the artist, after  
           work, to think  
 That his ideal Mary-smile should  
           stand  
 So very near him !—he, within  
           the brink  
 Of all that glory, let in by his hand  
           With too divine a rashness ! Yet  
           none shrink  
 Who gaze here now—albeit the thing  
           is planned  
 Sublimely in the thought's sim-  
           plicity  
 The Virgin, throned in empyreal  
           state  
 Minds only the young babe upon  
           her knee,  
 While, each side, angels bear the  
           royal weight,  
 Prostrated meekly, smiling tenderly  
 Oblivion of their wings ! the Child  
           thereat  
 Stretches its hand like God If  
           any should,  
 Because of some stiff draperies and  
           loose joints  
 Gaze scorn down from the heights  
           of Raffaelhood,  
 On Cimabue's picture—Heaven an-  
           oints  
 The head of no such critic, and his  
           blood  
 The poet's curse strikes full on, and  
           appoints

To ague and cold spasms for ever  
more  
A noble picture ' worthy of the shout  
Wherewith along the streets the  
people bore  
Its cherub faces, which the sun threw  
out  
Until they stooped and entered the  
church door !—  
Yet rightly was young Giotto talked  
about,  
Whom Cimabue found among the  
sheep,  
And knew as gods know gods, and  
carried home  
To paint the things he painted,  
with a deep  
And fuller insight and so overcome  
His chapel-Virgin with a heavenly  
sweep  
Of light For thus we mount into  
the sun  
Of great things known or acted I  
hold, too,  
That Cimabue smiled upon the lad,  
At the first stroke which passed  
what he could do —  
Or else his Virgin's smile had never  
had  
Such sweetness in't All great  
men who foreknew  
Their heirs in art, for art's sake have  
been glad,  
And bent their old white heads as  
if uncrowned,  
Fanatics of their pure ideals still  
Far more than of their laurels  
which were found  
With some less stalwart struggle of  
the will  
If old Margheritone trembled,  
swooned,  
And died despairing at the open sill  
Of other men's achievements (who  
achieved,  
By loving art beyond the master !) he  
Was old Margheritone and con-  
cerned  
Never, at youngest and most ecstasy  
A Virgin like that dream of one,  
which heaved  
The death-sigh from his heart If  
wistfully  
Margheritone sickened at the smell  
Of Cimabue's laurel, let him go !—  
Strong Cimabue stood up very well

In spite of Giotto's—and Anelico,  
The artist-saint, kept smiling in his  
cell  
The smile with which he welcomed  
the sweet slow  
Inbreak of angels (whitening  
through the dim  
That he might paint them !) while  
the sudden sense  
Of Raffael's future was revealed to  
him  
By force of his own fair works' com-  
petence  
The same blue waters where the  
dolphins swim  
Suggest the Tritons Through the  
blue Immense  
Strike out all swimmers ! cling not  
in the way  
Of one another, so to sink but learn  
The strong man's impulse, catch  
the fresh'ning spray  
He throws up in his motions and dis-  
cern  
By his clear westering eye, the  
time of day  
O God, Thou hast set us worthy gifts  
to earn,  
Beside Thy heaven and Thee ! and  
when I say  
'Tis worth while for the weakest man  
alive  
To live and die,—there's room too,  
I repeat,  
For all the strongest to live well, and  
strive  
Their own way, by their individual  
heat,  
Like a new bee-swarm leaving the old  
hive  
Despite the wax which tempteth  
violet-sweet  
So let the living live the dead retain  
Flowers on cold graves !—though  
honour's best supplied,  
When we bring actions, to prove  
theirs not vain

## XI

Cold graves, we say ? it shall be  
testified  
That living men who throb in heart  
and train,  
Without the dead, were colder If  
we tried

To sink the past beneath our feet, be  
sure

The future would not stand Pre-  
cipitate

This old roof from the shrine—and,  
insecure,

The nesting swallows fly off, mate  
from mate

Scant were the gardens, if the graves  
were fewer!

And the green poplars grew no  
longer straight

Whose tops not looked to Troy Why,  
who would fight

For Athens, and not swear by  
Marathon?

Who would build temples, without  
tombs in sight?

Who live without some dead man's  
benison?

Who seek truth, hope for good, or  
strive for right

If, looking up, he saw not in the  
sun

Some angel of the martyrs, all day  
long

Standing and waiting! your last  
rhythms will need

The earliest key-note Could I sing  
this song

If my dead masters had not taken  
heed

To help the heavens and earth to  
make me strong

As the wind ever will find out some  
reed,

And touch it to such issues as belong  
To such a frail thing? Who denies

the dead,  
Libations from full cups? Unless we

choose  
To look back to the hills behind us

spread  
The plains before us sadden and con-  
fuse,

If orphaned, we are disinherited

## XII

I would but turn these lachrymals to  
use,

Fill them with fresh oil from the  
olive grove

To feed the new lamp fuller Shall I  
say

What made my heart beat with  
exulting love,

A few weeks back?

## XIII

. The day was such a day  
As Florence owes the sun The  
sky above,

Its weight upon the mountains  
seemed to lay,

And palpitate in glory, like a dove  
Who has flown too fast, full-hearted.

Take away  
The image! for the heart of man

beat higher  
That day in Florence, flooding all  
her streets

And piazzas with a tumult and  
desire

The people, with accumulated heats,  
And faces turned one way, as if one

fire  
Did draw and flush them, leaving their  
old beats

Went upward to the palace Pitti  
wall

To thank their Grand-duke, who, not  
quite of course

Had graciously permitted, at their  
call,

The citizens to use their civic force  
To guard their civic homes So,

one and all  
The Tuscan cities streamed up to the  
source

Of this new good, at Florence, tak-  
ing it

As good so far, presageful of more  
good,—

The first torch of Italian freedom,  
lit

To toss in the next tiger's face who  
should

Approach too near them in a cruel  
fit —

The first pulse of an even flow of blood,  
To prove the level of Italian veins

Toward rights perceived and granted.  
How we gazed

From Casa Guidi windows, while,  
in trains

Of orderly procession—banners raised,  
And intermittent bursts of martial  
strains

Which died upon the shout, as if  
amazed

By gladness beyond music—they  
passed on!

The magistrates, with their insignia,  
passed,

And all the people shouted in the sun,  
 And all the thousand windows which had cast  
 A ripple of silks, in blue and scarlet,  
 down,  
 As if the houses overflowed at last,  
 Seemed to grow larger with fair heads and eyes  
 The lawyers passed, and still arose the shout,  
 And hands broke from the windows, to surprise  
 Those grave calm brows with bay-tree leaves thrown out  
 The priesthood passed the friars, with worldly-wise  
 Keen, sidelong glances from their beards, about  
 The street, to see who shouted ! many a monk  
 Who takes a long rope in the wa st, was there !  
 Whereat the popular exulta on drunk  
 With indrawn " vivas " the whole sunny air  
 While through the murmuring windows rose and sunk  
 A cloud of kerchiefed hands ! " the church makes fair  
 Her welcome in the new Pope's name " Ensued  
 The black sign of the " martyrs ! " name no name,  
 But count the graves in silence Next, were viewed  
 The artists, next, the trades, and after came  
 The populace, with flag and rights as good,  
 And very loud the shout was for that same  
 Motto, " Il popolo, " IL POPOLO,—  
 The word meant dukedom, empire, majesty,  
 And kings in such an hour might read it so  
 And next, with banners, each in his degree,  
 Deputed representatives a-row,  
 Of every separate state of Tuscany  
 Siena's she-wolf, bristling on the fold  
 Of the first flag, preceded Pisa's hare,

And Massa's lion floated calm in gold  
 Pienza's following with his silver stare,  
 A ezzo's steed pranced clear from bridle-hold,—  
 And well might shout our Florence, greeting there  
 These, and more brethren ! Last, the world had sent  
 The various children of her teeming flanks—  
 Greeks, English, French—as to some parliament  
 Of lovers of her Italy, in ranks,  
 Each bearing its land's symbols reverent,  
 At which the stones seemed breaking into thanks  
 And rattling up to the sky, such sounds in proof  
 Arose ! the very house-walls seemed to bend,  
 The very windows, up from door to roof,  
 Flashed out a rapture of bright heads, to mend,  
 With passionate looks, the gesture's whirling off  
 A hurricane of leaves ! Three hours did end  
 While all these passed, and ever in the crowd,  
 Rude men, unconscious of the tears that kept  
 Their beards moist, shouted, and some laughed aloud,  
 And none asked any why they laughed and wept  
 Friends kissed each other's cheeks, and foes long vowed  
 Did it more warmly, two-months' babies leapt  
 Right upward in their mothers' arms, whose black,  
 Wide, glittering eyes looked elsewhere, lovers pressed  
 Each before either neither glancing back,  
 And peasant maidens, smoothly 'tired and tressed,  
 Forgot to finger on their throats the slack  
 Great pearl-strings, while old blind men would not rest,  
 But pattered with their staves and with their shoes

Still on the stones, and smiled as if  
they saw  
O Heaven! I think that day had  
noble use

Among God's days So near stood  
Right and Law

Both mutually forborn! Law  
would not bruise,

Nor Right deny, and each in reverent  
awe

Honoured the other What if,  
ne'ertheless

The sun did, that day, leave upon  
the vines

No charta, and the liberal Duke's  
excess

Did scarce exceed a Guef's or Ghibel-  
line's

In the specific actual righteousness  
Of what that day he granted, <sup>1</sup> still  
the signs

Are good, and full of promise, we  
must say,

When multitudes thank kings for  
granting prayers

And kings concede their people's  
right to pray,

Both in the sunshine! Grievings are not  
despairs

So uttered, nor can royal claims  
dismay,

When men from humble homes and  
ducal chairs,

Hate wrong together It was well  
to view

Those banners ruffled in a Grand-  
duke's face,

Inscribed, "Live freedom, un on,  
and all true

Brave patriots who are aided by God's  
grace!"

Nor was it ill, when Leopoldo drew  
His little children to the window-place

He stood in at the Pitti, to suggest  
*They*, too, should govern as the people

willed

What a cry rose then! some, who  
saw the best,

Swore that his eyes filled up, and over-  
filled

With good warm human tears,  
which unrepressed

<sup>1</sup> Since when the constitutional concessions  
have been complete in Tuscany, as all the world  
knows The event breaks in upon the medita-  
tion, and is too fast for prophecy in these strange  
times —E B B

Ran down I like his face the fore-  
head's build

Has no capacious genius, yet per-  
haps

Sufficient comprehension,—mild and  
sad,

And careful nobly —not with care  
that wraps

Self-loving hearts, to stifle and make  
mad,

But careful with the care that shuns  
a lapse

Of faith and duty,—studious not to  
add

A burden in the gathering of a gain  
And so "God save the Duke" I say

with those  
Who that day shouted it, and while

dukes reign

May all wear, in the visible overflows  
Of spirit such a look of careful

pain!  
Methinks God loves it better than  
repose

#### XIV

And all the people who went up to let  
Their hearts out to that Duke, as  
has been told—

Where guess ye that the living people  
met

Kept tryst, formed ranks, chose  
leaders, first unrolled

Their banners?  
In the Loggia? where is set

Cellini's godlike "Perseus" bronze  
—or gold—

(How name the metal, when the statue  
flings

Its soul so in your eyes?) with brow  
and sword

Superbly calm as all opposing things  
Slain with the Gorgon, were no

more abhorred

Since ended?  
No! the people sought no wings

From "Perseus" in the Loggia, nor  
implored

An inspiration in the place beside  
From that dim bust of Brutus,

jagged and grand,  
Where Buonarrotti passionately tried

Out of the clenched marble to de-  
mand

The head of Rome's sublimest homi-  
cide,

Then dropt the quivering mallet  
 from his hand  
 Despairing he could find no model  
 stuff  
 Of Brutus, in all Florence, where he  
 found  
 The gods and gladiators thick  
 enough ?  
 Not there ! the people chose still  
 holier ground !  
 The people, who are simple, blind,  
 and rough,  
 Know their own angels, after look-  
 ing round  
 What chose they then ? where met  
 they ?

## xv

On the stone  
 Call'd Dante's,—a plain flat stone,  
 scarce discerned  
 From others in the pavement,—  
 whereupon  
 He used to bring his quiet chair out,  
 turned  
 To Brunelleschi's church, and pour  
 alone  
 The lava of his spirit when it  
 burned—  
 It is not cold to-day O passionate  
 Poor Dante, who, a banished Flor-  
 entine  
 Didst sit austere at banquets of the  
 great,  
 And muse upon this far-off stone of  
 thine,  
 And think how oft the passers used to  
 wait  
 A moment, in the golden day's de-  
 cline,  
 With " good-night, dearest Dante ! "  
 —well, good-night !  
 I muse now, Dante, and think,  
 verily,  
 Though chapelled in Ravenna's bye-  
 way, might  
 Thy buried bones be thrilled to  
 ecstasy,  
 Couldst know thy favourite stone's  
 elected right  
 As tryst-place for thy Tuscans to  
 foresee  
 Their earliest chartas from ! good  
 night, good morn,  
 Henceforward, Dante ! now my  
 soul is sure

That thine is better comforted of  
 scorn,  
 And looks down from the stars in  
 fuller cure,  
 Than when, in Santa Croce church,  
 forlorn  
 Of any corpse, the architect and  
 hewer  
 Did pile the empty marbles as thy  
 tomb !  
 For now thou art no longer exiled,  
 now  
 Best honoured !—we salute thee who  
 art come  
 Back to the old stone with a softer  
 brow  
 Than Giotto drew upon the wall, for  
 some  
 Good lovers of our age to track and  
 plough  
 Their way to, through Time's ordures  
 stratified,  
 And startle broad awake into the  
 dull  
 Bargello chamber Now, thou'rt  
 milder-eyed,  
 And Beatrix may leap up glad to  
 cull  
 Thy first smile, even in heaven and at  
 her side,  
 Like that which, nine years old,  
 looked beautiful  
 At Tuscan May-game Foolish  
 words ! I meant  
 Only that Dante loved his Florence  
 well  
 And Florence, now, to love him is  
 content !  
 I mean too, certes, that the sweetest  
 smell  
 Of love's dear incense, by the living  
 sent  
 To find the dead, is not acces-  
 sible  
 To your low livers ! no narcotic,—  
 not  
 Swung in a censer to a sleepy  
 tune —  
 But trod out in the morning air, by  
 hot  
 Quick spirits, who tread firm to ends  
 foreshown,  
 And use the name of greatness unfor-  
 got,  
 To meditate what greatness may be  
 done

## XVI

For Dante sits in heaven, and ye  
stand here,  
And more remains for doing, all  
must feel,  
Than trysting on his stone from year  
to year  
To shift processions, civic heel to  
heel  
The town's thanks to the Pitti Are  
ye freer  
For what was felt that day ? A  
chariot wheel  
May spin fast, yet the chariot never  
roll  
But if that day suggested some-  
thing good,  
And bettered, with one purpose, soul  
by soul,—  
Better means freer A land's  
brotherhood  
Is most puissant ! Men, upon the  
whole  
Are what they can be,—nations,  
what they would

## XVII

Will therefore, to be strong, thou  
Italy !  
Will to be noble ! Austrian Met-  
ternich  
Can fix no yoke unless the neck agree,  
And thine is like the lion's when  
the thick  
Dews shudder from it, and no man  
would be  
The stroker of his mane much less  
would prick  
His nostril with a reed When  
nations roar  
Like lions, who shall tame them,  
and defraud  
Of the due pasture by the river-shore ?  
Roar, therefore ! shake your dew-  
laps dry abroad  
The amphitheatre with open door  
Leads back upon the benches who  
applaud  
The last spear-thruster !

## XVIII

Yet the Heavens forbid  
That we should call on passion to  
confront  
The brutal with the brutal, and, amid  
This ripening world, suggest a lion-  
hunt

And lion-vengeance for the wrongs  
men did  
And do now though the spears are  
getting blunt  
We only call, because the sight and  
proof  
Of lion-strength hurts nothing, and  
to show  
A lion-heart, and measure paw with  
hoof,  
Helps something, even, and will  
instruct a foe  
Well as the onslaught, how to stand  
aloof !  
Or else the world gets past the mere  
brute blow  
Given or taken Children use the  
fist  
Until they are of age to use the  
brain  
And so we needed Cæsars to assist  
Man's justice, and Napoleons to  
explain  
God's counsel, when a point was  
nearly missed,  
Until our generations should  
attain  
Christ's stature nearer Not that we,  
alas !  
Attain already, but a single inch  
Will help to look down on the sword-  
man's pass,  
As Roland on a coward who could  
flinch,  
And, after chloroform and ether-gas,  
We find out slowly what the bee  
and finch  
Have ready found, through Nature's  
lamp in each,—  
How to our races we may justify  
Our individual claims, and, as we  
reach  
Our own grapes, bend the top vines  
to supply  
The children's uses how to fill a  
breach  
With olive branches, how to  
quench a lie  
With truth, and smite a foe upon the  
cheek  
With Christ's most conquering  
kiss ! why, these are things  
Worth a great nation's finding, to  
prove weak  
The "glorious arms" of military  
kings !



And so with wide embrace, my Eng-  
land, seek  
To stifle the bad heat and flicker-  
ings  
Of this world's false and nearly ex-  
pended fire!  
Draw palpitating arrows to the  
wood,  
And send abroad thy high hopes, and  
thy higher  
Resolves, from that most virtuous  
altitude,  
Till nations shall unconsciously aspire  
By looking up to thee, and learn  
that good  
And glory are not different An-  
nounce law  
By freedom, exalt chivalry by  
peace,  
Instruct how clear calm eyes can  
overawe,  
And how pure hands, stretched  
simply to release  
A bond-slave, will not need a sword  
to draw  
To be held dreadful O my Eng-  
land, cease  
Thy purple with no alien agonies  
Which reach thee through the net  
of war! No war!  
Disband thy captains change thy  
victories,  
Be henceforth prosperous as the  
angels are—  
Helping, not humbling  
xix  
Drums and battle cries  
Go out in music of the morning  
star—  
And soon we shall have thinkers in  
the place  
Of fighters, each found able as a  
man  
To strike electric influence through a  
race,  
Unstayed by city-wall and barbi-  
can  
The poet shall look grander in the face  
Than ever he looked of old, when  
he began  
To sing that "Achillean wrath which  
slew  
So many heroes,"—seeing he shall  
treat  
The deeds of souls heroic toward the  
true—

The oracles of life—previsions sweet  
And awful, like divine swans gliding  
through  
White arms of Leda, which will  
leave the heat  
Of their escaping godship to endure  
The human medium with a hea-  
venly flush  
Meanwhile, in the same Italy we want  
Not popular passion, to arise and  
crush,  
But popular conscience, which may  
covenant  
For what it knows Concede with-  
out a blush—  
To grant the "civic guard" is not to  
grant  
The civic spirit, living and awake  
Those lappets on your shoulders,  
citizens,  
Your eyes strain after sideways till  
they ache,  
While still, in admirations and amens  
The crowd comes up on festa-days,  
to take  
The great sight in—are not intelli-  
gence,  
Not courage even—alas, if not the  
sign  
Of something very noble, they are  
nought,  
For every day ye dress your sallow  
kne  
With fringes down their cheeks,  
though unbesought  
They loll their heavy heads and  
drag the wine  
And bear the wooden yoke as they  
were taught  
The first day What ye want is  
light—indeed  
Not sunlight—(ye may well look up  
surprised  
To those unfathomable heavens  
that feed  
Your purple hills!)—but God's light  
organised  
In some high soul, crowned capable  
to lead  
The conscious people,—conscious and  
advised,—  
For if we lift a people like mere clay,  
It falls the same We want thee, O  
unfound  
And sovran teacher! if thy  
beard be grey

Or black, we bid thee rise up from the  
ground  
And speak the word God giveth  
thee to say,  
Inspiring into all this people round  
Instead of passion, thought, which  
pioneers  
All generous passion, purifies from sin,  
And strikes the hour for Rise  
thou teacher ! here's  
A crowd to make a nation !—best  
begin  
By making each a man, till all be  
peers  
Of earth's true patriots and pure  
martyrs in  
Knowing and daring Best unbar  
the doors  
Which Peter's heirs keep locked so  
overclose  
They only let the mice across the  
floors,  
While every churchman dangles as he  
goes  
The great key at his girdle and  
abhors  
In Christ's name, meekly Open  
wide the house—  
Concede the entrance with Christ's  
liberal mind,  
And set the tables with His wine and  
bread  
What ! commune in "both kinds ?"  
In every kind—  
Wine, wafer, love, hope truth un-  
limited,  
Nothing kept back For, when a  
man is blind  
To starlight, will he see the rose is red ?  
A bondsman shivering at a Jesuit's  
foot—  
"Væ ! mea culpa ! " is not like to stand  
A freedman at a despot's, and dis-  
pute  
His titles by the balance in his hand  
Weighing them " suo jure " Tend  
the root,  
If careful of the branches, and ex-  
pand  
The inner souls of men, before you  
strive  
For civic heroes

xx

But the teacher, where ?  
From all these crowded faces, all  
alive,—

Eyes of their own lids flashing them-  
selves bare,—  
And brows that with a mobile life  
contrive  
A deeper shadow,—may we no wise  
dare  
To point a finger out and touch a  
man,  
And cry " this is the leader " What,  
all these !—  
Broad heads black eyes,—yet not  
a soul that ran  
From God down with a message ? All,  
to please  
The donna waving measures with  
her fan,  
And not the judgment-angel on his  
knees—  
The trumpet just an inch off from  
his lips—  
Who when he breathes next, will put  
out the sun ?  
Yet mankind's self were foundered  
in eclipse,  
If lacking, with a great work to be  
done,  
A doer No, the earth already dips  
Back into light—a better day's  
begun—  
And soon this doer, teacher, will  
stand plain,  
And build the golden pipes and  
synthesize  
This people-organ for a holy strain  
And we who hope thus, still in all  
these eyes,  
Go sounding for the deep look  
which shall drain  
Suffused thought into channelled  
enterprise !  
Where is the teacher ? What now  
may he do,  
Who shall do greatly ? Doth he gird  
his waist  
With a monk's rope, like Luther ?  
or pursue  
The goat, like Tell ? or dry his nets  
in haste,  
Like Masaniello when the sky was  
blue ?  
Keep house like any peasant, with  
inlaced,  
Bare, brawny arms about his favour-  
ite child,  
And meditative looks beyond the  
door ?—

(But not to mark the kidling's  
teeth have filed  
The green shoots of his vine which last  
year bore  
Full twenty bunches,) or on triple-  
piled  
Throne-velvets, shall we see him  
bless the poor  
Like any Pontiff, in the Poorest's  
name,—  
While the tiara holds itself aslope  
Upon his steady brows, which, all  
the same,  
Bend mildly to permit the people's  
hope ?

## XXI

Whatever hand shall grasp this  
oriflamme  
Whatever man (last peasant or first  
Pope  
Seeking to free his country !)  
shall appear  
Teach, lead, s like fire into the masses,  
fill  
These empty bladders with fine  
air, insphere  
These wills into a unity of will,  
And make of Italy a nation—dear  
And blessed be that man ! the  
Heavens shall kill  
No leaf the earth shall grow for  
him, and Death  
Shall cast him back upon the lap of  
Life,  
To live more surely in a clarion-  
breath  
Of hero-music ! Brutus, with the  
knife,  
Rienzi, with the fasces, throb be-  
neath  
Rome's stones, and more who threw  
away joy's life  
Like Pallas, that the beauty of their  
souls  
Might ever shine untroubled and  
entire !  
But if it can be true that he who  
rolls  
The Church's thunders will reserve  
her fire  
The only light, from eucharistic  
bowls  
Will pour new life for nations that  
expire  
And rend the scarlet of his Papal  
vest

To gird the weak loins of his country-  
men—  
I hold that man surpasses all the  
rest  
Of Romans, heroes, patriots—and  
that when  
He sat down on the throne, he  
dispossessed  
The first graves of some glory See  
again,  
This country-saving is a glorious  
thing !  
Why, say a common man achieved  
it ? Well !  
Say, a rich man did ? Excellent !  
A king ?  
That grows sublime ! A priest ?  
Improbable !  
A Pope ? Ah, there we stop and  
cannot bring  
Our faith up to the leap, with history's  
bell  
So heavy round the neck of it—  
albeit  
We fain would grant the possibility  
For *thy* sake Pio Nono !

## XXII

Stretch thy feet  
In that case—I will kiss them rever-  
ently  
As any pilgrim to the Papal seat !  
And, such proved possible, thy throne  
to me  
Shall seem as holy a place as Pel-  
lico's  
Venetian dungeon, or as Spielberg's  
grate,  
Where the fair Lombard woman  
hung the rose  
Of her sweet soul, by its own dewy  
weight,  
(Because her sun shone *inside* to  
the close !)  
And pining so, died early, yet too late  
For what she suffered ! Yea I  
will not choose  
Betwixt thy throne, Pope Pius, and  
the spot  
Marked red for ever spite of rains  
and dews  
Where two fell riddled by the Aus-  
trian's shot—  
The brothers Bandiera, who accuse,  
With one same mother-voice and  
face (that what

They speak may be invincible), the  
 sins  
 Of earth's tormentors before God, the  
 Just,  
 Until the unconscious thunder-bolt  
 begins  
 To loosen in His grasp

## xxiii

And yet we must  
 Beware, and mark the natural kiths  
 and kins  
 Of circumstance and office, and distrust  
 A rich man reasoning in a poor  
 man's hut  
 A poet who neglects pure truth to  
 prove  
 Statistic fact, a child who leaves a  
 rut  
 For the smooth road, a priest who  
 vows his glove  
 Exhales no grace, a prince who  
 walks a-foot,  
 A woman who has sworn she will not  
 love,  
 Ninth Pius sitting in Seventh  
 Gregory's chair,  
 With Andrea Doria's forehead !

## xxiv

Count what goes  
 To making up a Pope, before he  
 wear  
 That triple crown We pass the  
 world-wide throes  
 Which went to make the Popedom,  
 —the despair  
 Of free men, good men, wise men  
 the dread shows  
 Of women's faces, by the faggot's  
 flash  
 Tossed out, to the minutest stir and  
 throb  
 Of the white lips, least tremble of  
 a lash,  
 To glut the red stare of the licensed  
 mob !  
 The short mad cries down oubliettes,  
 —the plash  
 So horribly far off ! priests, trained  
 to rob  
 And kings that, like encouraged  
 nightmares, sate  
 On nations' hearts most heavily dis-  
 tressed

With monstrous sights and apo-  
 phthegms of fate  
 We pass these things,—because " the  
 times " are prest  
 With necessary charges of the  
 weight  
 Of all the sin, and " Calvin, for  
 the rest,  
 Made bold to burn Servetus—Ah,  
 men err ! "—  
 And, so do *Churches* ! which is all we  
 mean  
 To bring to proof in any register  
 Of theological fat line and lean—  
 So drive them back into the pens !  
 refer  
 Old sins with long beards, and " I wis  
 and ween,"  
 Entirely to the times—the times—  
 the times !  
 Nor ever ask why this preponderant,  
 Infallible, pure Church could set  
 her chimes  
 Most loudly then, just then, most  
 jubilant,  
 Precisely then—when mankind  
 stood in crimes  
 Full heart-deep and Heaven's judg-  
 ments were not scant  
 Inquire still less, what signifies a  
 Church  
 Of perfect inspiration and pure laws,  
 Who burns the first man with a  
 brimstone torch,  
 And grinds the second, bone by bone,  
 because  
 The times, forsooth, are used to  
 rack and scorch !  
 What is a holy Church unless she awes  
 The times down from their sins ?  
 Did Christ select  
 Such amiable times, to come and teach  
 Love to, and mercy ? Why, the  
 world were wrecked  
 If every mere great man, who lives to  
 reach  
 A little leaf of popular respect,  
 Attained not simply by some special  
 breach  
 In his land's customs,—by some  
 precedence  
 In thought and act—which, having  
 proved him higher  
 Than his own times, proved too his  
 competence  
 Of helping them to wonder and aspire

## xxv

My words are guiltless of the bigot's  
sense !  
My soul has fire to mingle with the  
fire  
Of all these souls, within or out of  
doors  
Of Rome's Church or another I  
believe  
In one priest, and one temple, with  
its floors  
Of shining jasper, gloom'd at morn  
and eve  
By countless knees of earnest  
auditors,  
And crystal walls, too lucid to per-  
ceive,—  
That none may take the measure  
of the place  
And say, "so far the porphyry,  
then, the flint—  
To this mark, mercy goes, and  
there, ends grace,"  
While still the permeable crystals hunt  
At some white starry distance,  
bathed in space !  
I feel how nature's ice-crusts keep  
the dint  
Of undersprings of silent Deity,  
I hold the articulated gospels, which  
Show Christ among us, crucified on  
tree,  
I love all who love truth, if poor or  
rich  
In what they have won of truth  
possessively !  
No altars and no hands defiled with  
pitch  
Shall scare me off, but I will pray  
and eat  
With all these—taking leave to  
choose my ewers  
And say at last, "Your visible  
Churches cheat  
Their inward types, and if a Church  
assures  
Of standing without failure and de-  
feat,  
That Church both fails and lies !"

## xxvi

To leave which lures  
Of wider subject through past  
years,—behold,  
We come back from the Popedom to  
the Pope

To ponder what he *must* be, ere we  
are bold  
For what he *may* be, with our heavy  
hope  
To trust upon his soul So, fold by  
fold,  
Explore this mummy in the priestly  
cope  
Transmitted through the darks of  
time, to catch  
The man within the wrappage, and  
discern  
How he, an honest man, upon the  
watch  
Full fifty years, for what a man may  
learn,  
Contrived to get just there, with  
what a snatch  
Of old world oboli he had to earn  
The passage through, with what  
a drowsy sop  
To drench the busy barkings of his  
brain,  
What ghosts of pale tradition,  
wreathed with hop  
'Gainst wakeful thought, he had to  
entertain  
For heavenly visions, and consent  
to stop  
The clock at noon, and let the hour  
remain  
(Without vain windings up) invio-  
late,  
Against all chimings from the belfry  
Lo !  
From every given pope you must  
abate,  
Albert you love him, some things—  
good, you know—  
Which every given heretic you  
hate  
Claims for his own, as being plainly  
so  
A pope must hold by popes a little,  
—yes,  
By councils,—from Nicæa up to  
Trent,—  
By hierocratic empire, more or  
less  
Irresponsible to men,—he must re-  
sent  
Each man's particular conscience,  
and repress  
Inquiry, meditation, argument,  
As tyrants faction Also, he must  
not

Love truth too dangerously, but  
 prefer  
 "The interests of the Church,"  
 because a blot  
 Is better than a rent in miniver,—  
 Submit to see the people swallow  
 hot  
 Husk-porridge which his chartered  
 churchmen stir  
 Quoting the only true God's  
 epigraph,  
 "Feed my lambs, Peter!"—must  
 consent to sit  
 Attesting with his pastoral ring and  
 staff,  
 To such a picture of our Lady, hit  
 Off well by artist angels, though  
 not half  
 As fair as Giotto would have painted  
 it,  
 To such a vial, where a dead man's  
 blood  
 Runs yearly warm beneath a church-  
 man's finger,  
 To such a holy house of stone and  
 wood,  
 Whereof a cloud of angels was the  
 bringer  
 From Bethlehem to Loreto!—  
 Were it good  
 For any pope on earth to be a flinger  
 Of stones against these high-  
 mitched counterfeits?  
 Apostates only are iconoclasts  
 He dares not say, while this false  
 thing abets  
 That true thing, "this is false!"  
 he keepeth fasts  
 And prayers, as prayers and fasts  
 were silver frets  
 To change a note upon a string that  
 lasts,  
 And make a lie a virtue Now,  
 if he  
 Did more than this,—higher hoped  
 and braver dared,—  
 I think he were a pope in jeopardy,  
 Or no pope rather! for his soul had  
 barred  
 The vaulting of his life And  
 certainly,  
 If he do only this, mankind's regard  
 Moves on from him at once, to seek  
 some new  
 Teacher and leader! He is good  
 and great

According to the deeds a pope can  
 do,  
 Most liberal, save those bonds, affec-  
 tionate,  
 As princes may be, and, as priests  
 are true—  
 But only the ninth Pius after eight,  
 When all's praised most At best  
 and hopefullest,  
 He's pope—we want a man! his  
 heart beats warm,  
 But, like the prince enchanted to  
 the waist,  
 He sits in stone, and hardens by a  
 charm  
 Into the marble of his throne high-  
 placed!  
 Mild benediction, waves his saintly  
 arm—  
 So good! but what we want's a  
 perfect man,  
 Complete and all alive half travert-  
 ine  
 Half suits our need, and ill sub-  
 serves our plan  
 Feet, knees, nerves, sinews, energies  
 divine  
 Were never yet too much for men  
 who ran  
 In such exalted ways as this of thine,  
 Deliverer whom we seek, whoe'er  
 thou art,  
 Pope, prince, or peasant! If, indeed,  
 the first,  
 The noblest, therefore! since the  
 heroic heart  
 Within thee must be great enough to  
 burst  
 Those trammels buckling to the  
 baser part  
 Thy saintly peers in Rome, who  
 crossed and cursed  
 With the same finger

## xxvii

Come, appear, be found,  
 If pope or peasant, come! we hear the  
 cock,  
 The courtier of the mountains  
 when first crowned  
 With golden dawn, and orient  
 glories flock  
 To meet the sun upon the highest  
 ground  
 Take voice and work! we wait to  
 hear thee knock

At some one of our Florentine nine  
gates,  
On each of which was imaged a  
sublime  
Face of a Tuscan genius, which,  
for hate's  
And love's sake both, our Florence  
in her prime  
Turned boldly on all comers to her  
states,  
As heroes turned their shields in  
antique time,  
Blazoned with honourable acts  
And though  
The gates are blank now of such  
images,  
And Petrarch looks no more from  
Nicolo  
Toward dear Arezzo, 'twixt the  
acacia trees,  
Nor Dante, from gate Gallo—still  
we know,  
Despite the razing of the blazonries,  
Remains the consecration of the  
shield,—  
The dead heroic faces will start out  
On all these gates, if foes should  
take the field,  
And blend sublimely, at the earliest  
shout,  
With our live fighters, who will  
scorn to yield  
A hair's-breadth ev'n, when, gazing  
round about,  
They find in what a glorious com-  
pany  
They fight the foes of Florence !  
Who will grudge  
His one poor life, when that great  
man we see,  
Has given five hundred years, the  
world being judge,  
To help the glory of his Italy ?  
Who, born the fair side of the Alps,  
will budge,  
When Dante stays, when Ariosto  
stays,  
When Petrarch stays, for ever ? Ye  
bring swords,  
My Tuscans ? Why, if wanted in  
this haze,  
Bring swords, but first bring souls !—  
bring thoughts and words  
Unrusted by a tear of yesterday's,  
Yet awful by its wrong, and cut these  
cords

And mow this green lush falseness  
to the roots  
And shut the mouth of hell below the  
swathe !  
And if ye can bring songs too, let  
the lute's  
Recoverable music softly bathe  
Some poet's hand, that, through  
all bursts and bruises  
Of popular passion—all unripe and  
rather  
Convictions of the popular intel-  
lect—  
Ye may not lack a finger up the air  
Annunciative, reproving, pure,  
erect,  
To show which way your first Ideal  
bare  
The whiteness of its wings, when,  
sorely pecked  
By falcons on your wrists, it unaware  
Arose up overhead, and out of sight

## XXVIII

Meanwhile, let all the far ends of the  
world  
Breathe back the deep breath of  
their old delight,  
To swell the Italian banner just un-  
furled  
Help, lands of Europe ! for, if  
Austria fight  
The drums will bar your slumber  
Who had curled  
The laurel for your thousand  
artists' brows,  
If these Italian hands had planted  
none ?  
And who can sit down idle in the  
house,  
Nor hear appeals from Buonarotti's  
stone  
And Raffael's canvas, rousing and  
to rouse ?  
Where's Poussin's master ? Gallic  
Avignon  
Bred Laura, and Vacluse's fount  
has stirred  
The heart of France too strongly,—  
as it lets  
Its little stream out, like a wizard's  
bird  
Which bounds upon its emerald  
wings, and wets  
The rocks on each side—that she  
should not guard

Her loins with Charlemagne's sword,  
 when foes beset  
 The country of her Petrarch  
 Spain may well  
 Be minded how from Italy she caught,  
 To mingle with her tinkling Moor-  
 ish bell,  
 A fuller cadence and a subtler thought,  
 And even the New World, the  
 receptacle  
 Of freemen, may send glad men, as  
 it ought,  
 To greet Vespucci Amerigo's door,  
 While England claims, by trump of  
 poetry,  
 Verona, Venice, the Ravenna shore,  
 And dearer holds her Milton's Fiesole  
 Than Malvern with a sunset run-  
 ning o'er

## xxix

And Vallombrosa we two went to see  
 Last June, beloved companion,—  
 where sublime  
 The mountains live in holy families,  
 And the slow pinewoods ever  
 climb and climb  
 Half up their breasts, just stagger  
 as they seize  
 Some grey crag—drop back with  
 it many a time,  
 And straggle blindly down the preci-  
 pice!  
 The Vallombrosan brooks were  
 strewn as thick  
 That June-day, knee-deep, with  
 dead beechen leaves,  
 As Milton saw them ere his heart  
 grew sick,  
 And his eyes blind I think the  
 monks and beeves  
 Are all the same too scarce they  
 have changed the wick  
 On good St Gualbert's altar, which  
 receives  
 The convent's pilgrims, and the  
 pool in front  
 Wherein the hill-stream trout are  
 cast, to wait  
 The beatific vision, and the grunt  
 Used at refectory, keeps its weedy  
 state,  
 To baffle saintly abbots, who  
 would count  
 The fish across their breviary, nor  
 'bate

The measure of their steps O  
 waterfalls  
 And forests! sound and silence!  
 mountains bare  
 That leap up peak by peak, and  
 catch the palls  
 Of purple and silver mist, to rend  
 and share  
 With one another, at electric calls  
 Of life in the sunbeams—till we can-  
 not dare  
 Fix your shapes, learn your num-  
 ber! we must think  
 Your beauty and your glory helped  
 to fill  
 The cup of Milton's soul so to the  
 brink  
 That he no more was thirsty when  
 God's will  
 Had shattered to his sense the  
 last chain-link  
 By which he drew from Nature's  
 visible  
 The fresh well-water Satisfied by  
 this,  
 He sang of Adam's Paradise and  
 smiled  
 Remembering Vallombrosa There-  
 fore is  
 The place divine to English man and  
 child—  
 We all love Italy

## xxx

## Our Italy's

The darling of the earth—the trea-  
 sury, piled  
 With reveries of gentle ladies, flung  
 Aside, like ravelled silk, from life's  
 worn stuff—  
 With coins of scholars' fancy,  
 which being rung  
 On work-day counter, still sound  
 silver-proof—  
 In short, with all the dreams of  
 dreamers young,  
 Before their heads have time for  
 slipping off  
 Hope's pillow to the ground  
 How oft, indeed,  
 We all have sent our souls out from  
 the north,  
 On bare white feet which would not  
 print nor bleed,  
 To climb the Alpine passes and look  
 forth,



Where the low murmuring Lom-  
bard rivers lead  
Their bee-like way to gardens almost  
worth  
The sight which thou and I see  
afterward  
From Tuscan Bellosguardo, wide  
awake  
When standing on the actual,  
blessed sward  
Where Galileo stood at nights to  
take  
The vision of the stars, we find it  
hard,  
Gazing upon the earth and heaven, to  
make  
A choice of beauty Therefore let  
us all  
In Galleo, or in any other land  
Refreshed once by the fountain-  
rise and fall  
Of dreams of this fair south,—who  
understand  
A little how the Tuscan musical  
Vowels do round themselves, as if  
they plann'd  
Eternities of separate sweetness,—  
we  
Who loved Sorrento vines in picture-  
book,  
Or ere in wine-cup we pledged  
faith or glee—  
Who loved Rome's wolf, with demi-  
gods at suck,  
Or ere we loved truth's own divin-  
ity,—  
Who loved, in brief, the classic hill  
and brook,  
And Ovid's dreaming tales, and  
Petrarch's song  
Or ere we loved Love's self !—why,  
let us give  
The blessing of our souls, and wish  
them strong  
To bear it to the height where prayers  
arrive,  
When faithful spirits pray against a  
wrong,  
To this great cause of southern men,  
who strive  
In God's name for man's rights,  
and shall not fail !

XXXI

Behold, they shall not fail The  
shouts ascend

Above the shrieks, in Naples, and  
prevail  
Rows of shot corpses, waiting for the  
end  
Of burial seem to smile up straight  
and pale  
Into the azure air, and apprehend  
That final gun-flash from Paler-  
mo's coast,  
Which lightens their apocalypse of  
death  
So let them die ! The world shows  
nothing lost,  
Therefore not blood ! Above or  
underneath,  
What matter, brothers, if we keep  
our post  
On truth's and duty's side ? As  
sword to sheath,  
Dust turns to grave, but souls find  
place in Heaven  
O friends, heroic daring is success,  
The eucharistic bread requires no  
leaven,  
And though your ends were hopeless,  
we should bless  
Your cause as holy ! Strive—and,  
having striven  
Take, for God's recompense, that  
righteousness !

## PART II

I

I wrote a meditation and a dream,  
Hearing a little child sing in the  
street  
I leant upon his music as a theme,  
Till it gave way beneath my heart's  
full beat,  
Which tried at an exultant prophecy  
But dropped before the measure  
was complete—  
Alas, for songs and hearts ! O Tus-  
cany,  
O Dante's Florence, is the type too  
plain ?  
Didst thou, too, only sing of liberty,  
As little children take up a high  
strain  
With unintentioned voices, and break  
off  
To sleep upon their mothers' knees  
again ?  
Couldst thou not watch one hour ?  
Then, sleep enough—

That sleep may hasten manhood,  
and sustain  
The faint pale spirit with some mus-  
cular stuff

## II

But we, who cannot slumber as  
thou dost,  
We thinkers, who have thought for  
thee and failed,—  
We hoppers, who have hoped for  
thee and lost,—  
We poets, wandered round by  
dreams<sup>1</sup> who hailed  
From this Atrides' roof (with  
lintel-post  
Which still drips blood,—the worse  
part hath prevailed)  
The fire-voice of the beacons, to  
declare  
Troy taken, sorrow ended,—cozened  
through  
A crimson sunset in a misty air,—  
What now remains for such as we, to  
do ?  
—God's judgments, peradventure,  
will He bare  
To the roots of thunder, if we kneel  
and sue ?

## III

From Casa Guidi windows I looked  
forth,  
And saw ten thousand eyes of  
Florentines  
Flash back the triumph of the  
Lombard north,—  
Saw fifty banners, freighted with  
the signs  
And exultations of the awakened  
earth,  
Float on above the multitude in lines,  
Straight to the Pitti So, the  
vision went,  
And so, between those populous rough  
hands  
Raised in the sun, Duke Leopold  
outleant,  
And took the patriot's oath, which  
henceforth stands  
Among the oaths of perjurers,  
eminent  
To catch the lightnings ripened for  
these lands

## IV

Why swear at all, thou false Duke  
Leopold ?  
What need to swear ? What need  
to boast thy blood  
Taintless of Austria, and thy heart  
unsold  
Away from Florence ? It was under-  
stood  
God made thee not too vigorous  
or too bold,  
And men had patience with thy quiet  
mood,  
And women, pity, as they saw thee  
pale  
Their festive streets with premature  
grey hairs  
We turned the mild dejection of  
thy face  
To princely meanings, took thy  
wrinkling cares  
For ruffling hopes, and called thee  
weak, not base  
Better to light the torches for more  
prayers  
And smoke the pale Madonnas at  
the shrine,  
Being still "our poor Grand-duke,"  
"our good Grand-duke,"  
"Who cannot help the Austrian  
in his line,"  
Than write an oath upon a nation's  
book  
For men to spit at with scorn's  
blurring brine !  
Who dares forgive what none can  
overlook ?

## V

For me, I do repent me in this dust  
Of towns and temples, which makes  
Italy,—  
I sigh amid the sighs which breathe  
a gust  
Of dying century to century,  
Around us on the uneven crater-  
crust  
Of the old worlds,—I bow my soul  
and knee,  
And sigh and do repent me of my  
fault  
That ever I believed the man was  
true  
These sceptred strangers shun the  
common salt,  
And, therefore when the general  
board's in view,

<sup>1</sup> Referring to the well known opening passage  
of the "Agamemnon" of Æschylus

They standing up to carve for  
 blind and halt,  
 We should suspect the viands which  
 ensue  
 And I repent that in this time and  
 place,  
 Where all the corpse-lights of experi-  
 ence burn  
 From Cæsar's and I orenzo's fester-  
 ing race  
 To illumine groping reasoners, I could  
 learn  
 No better counsel for a simple  
 case  
 Than to put faith in princes, in my  
 turn  
 Heavens ! had the death-piles of  
 the ancient years  
 Flared up in vain before me ? Knew  
 I not  
 What stench arises from their  
 purple gears,—  
 And how the sceptres witness whence  
 they got  
 Their briar-wood, crackling through  
 the atmosphere's  
 Foul smoke, by princely perjuries,  
 kept hot ?  
 Forgive me, ghosts of patriots,—  
 Brutus thou  
 Who trailest downhill into life again  
 Thy blood-weighed cloak, to indict  
 me with thy slow  
 Reproachful eyes !—for being taught  
 in vain  
 That while the illegitimate Cæsars  
 show  
 Of meaner stature than the first full  
 strain,  
 (Confessed incompetent to conquer  
 Gaul)  
 They swoon as feebly and cross  
 Rubicons  
 As rashly as any Julius of them all  
 Forgive, that I forgot the mind that  
 runs  
 Through absolute races, too unscep-  
 tical !  
 I saw the man among his little sons,  
 His lips warm with their kisses  
 while he swore —  
 And I, because I am a woman, I,  
 Who felt my own child's coming  
 life before  
 The prescience of my soul, and held  
 faith high,

I could not bear to think, whoever  
 bore,  
 That lips, so warmed, could shape so  
 cold a lie

## VI

From Casa Guidi windows I looked  
 out,  
 Again looked, and beheld a different  
 sight  
 The Duke had fled before the  
 people's shout  
 " Long live the Duke ! " A people,  
 to speak right,  
 Should speak as soft as courtiers,  
 lest a doubt  
 Turn gracious sovereign brows to  
 curdled white  
 Moreover that same dangerous  
 shouting meant  
 Some gratitude for future favours,  
 which  
 Were only promised,—the Con-  
 stituent  
 Implied,—the whole being subject to  
 the hitch  
 In motu proprios, very incident  
 To all these Czars, from Paul to Paul-  
 ovitch  
 Whereat the people rose up in the  
 dust  
 Of the Duke's flying feet, and shouted  
 still,  
 And loudly only, this time, as was  
 just,  
 Not " Live the Duke," who had fled,  
 for good or ill,  
 But " Live the People," who re-  
 mained and must  
 The unrenounced and unrenounce-  
 able

## VII

Long live the people ! How they  
 lived ! and boiled  
 And bubbled in the cauldron of the  
 street !  
 How the young blustered, nor the  
 old recoiled,  
 And what a thunderous stir of tongues  
 and feet  
 Trod flat the palpitating bells, and  
 foiled  
 The joy-guns of their echo, shattering  
 it !  
 How they pulled down the Duke's  
 arms everywhere !

How they set up new cafe-signs, to show  
 Where patriots might sip ices in pure air—  
 (Yet the fresh paint smelt somewhat)  
 To and fro  
 How marched the civic guard, and stopped to stare  
 When boys broke windows in a civic glow  
 How rebel songs were sung to loyal tunes,  
 And the pope cursed, in ecclesiastic metres!  
 How all the Circoli grew large as moons,  
 And all the speakers, moonstruck!—thankful greeters  
 Of prospects which struck poor the ducal boons,  
 A mere free press and chambers!—frank repeaters  
 Of great Guerazzi's praises  
 "There's a man  
 The father of the land!—who, truly great,  
 Takes off that national disgrace and burn  
 The farthing tax upon our Florence-gate  
 And saves Italia as he only can"  
 How all the nobles fled, and would not wait  
 Because they were most noble! which being so,  
 How the mob vowed to burn their palaces,  
 Because they were too free to have leave to go  
 How grown men raged at Austria's wickedness,  
 And smoked,—while fifty strip-lings in a row  
 Marched straight to Piedmont for the wrong's redress!  
 Who says we failed in duty, we who wore  
 Black velvet like Italian democrats  
 Who slashed our sleeves like patriots, nor forswore  
 The true republic in the form of hats?  
 We chased the Archbishop from the Duomo door—  
 We chalked the walls with bloody caveats

Against all tyrants If we did not fight  
 Exactly, we fired muskets up the void,  
 To show that victory was ours of right  
 We met discussed in every place self-buoyed  
 Except, perhaps, 't the chambers, day and night  
 We proved that all the poor should be employed,  
 And yet the rich not worked for anywise—  
 Pay certified, yet payers abrogated,  
 Full work secured, yet liabilities  
 To over-work excluded,—not one bated  
 Of all our holidays, that still, at twice  
 Or thrice a-week, are moderately rated  
 We proved that Austria was dislodged, or would  
 Or should be and that Tuscany in arms  
 Should would, dislodge her, in high hardihood!  
 And yet, to leave our piazzas, shops, and farms,  
 For the bare sake of fighting, was not good  
 We proved that also—"Did we carry charms  
 Against being killed ourselves, that we should rush  
 On killing others? What! desert herewith  
 Our wives and mothers!—was that duty? Tush!"  
 At which we shook the sword within the sheath  
 Like heroes—only louder! and the flush  
 Ran up our cheek to meet the victor's wreath  
 Nay, what we proved, we shouted—how we shouted  
 (Especially the little boys did), planting  
 That tree of liberty whose fruit is doubted  
 Because the roots are not of nature's granting—  
 A tree of good and evil!—none, without it,  
 Grow gods!—alas, and, with it, men were wanting

## VIII

O holy knowledge, holy liberty,  
 O holy rights of nations ! If I speak  
 These bitter things against the  
 jugglery  
 Of days that in your names proved  
 blind and weak,  
 It is that tears are bitter When  
 we see  
 The brown skulls grin at death in  
 churchyards bleak,  
 We do not cry, " This Yorick is too  
 light "—  
 For death grows deathlier with that  
 mouth he makes  
 So with my mocking Bitter things  
 I write  
 Because my soul is bitter for your  
 sakes,  
 O freedom ! O my Florence !

## IX

Men who might  
 Do greatly in a universe that breaks  
 And burns, must ever *know* before  
 they do  
 Courage and patience are but sacri-  
 fice,  
 And sacrifice is offered for and to  
 Something conceived of Each man  
 pays a price  
 For what himself counts precious,  
 whether true  
 Or false the appreciation it implies  
 Here, was no knowledge, no concep-  
 tion, nought !  
 Desire was absent, that provides great  
 deeds  
 From out the greatness of preven-  
 ient thought,  
 And action, action, like a flame that  
 needs  
 A steady breath and fuel, being  
 caught  
 Up, like a burning reed from other  
 reeds  
 Flashed in the empty and uncer-  
 tain air,  
 Then wavered, then went out Be-  
 hold, who blames  
 A crooked course, when not a goal  
 is there  
 To round the fervid striving of the  
 games ?  
 An ignorance of means may minis-  
 ter

To greatness, but an ignorance of  
 aims  
 Makes it impossible to be great at  
 all  
 So, with our Tuscans ! Let none dare  
 to say,  
 Here virtue never can be national,  
 Here fortitude can never cut its way  
 Between the Austrian muskets, out  
 of thrall  
 I tell you rather, that whoever may  
 Discern true ends here, shall grow  
 pure enough  
 To love them, brave enough to strive  
 for them,  
 And strong to reach them, though  
 the roads be rough  
 That having learnt—by no mere  
 apophthegm—  
 Not the mere draping of a graceful  
 stuff  
 About a statue, brodered at the  
 hem,—  
 Not the mere trilling on an opera  
 stage,  
 Of " *liberta* " to bravos—(a fair word,  
 Yet too allied to inarticulate rage  
 And breathless sobs, for singing,  
 though the chord  
 Were deeper than they struck it !)  
 —but the gauge  
 Of civil wants sustained, and wrongs  
 abhorred,—  
 The serious, sacred meaning and  
 full use  
 Of freedom for a nation,—then, in-  
 deed,  
 Our Tuscans, underneath the bloody  
 dews  
 Of a new morning, rising up agreed  
 And bold, will want no Saxon souls  
 or thews,  
 To sweep their piazzas clear of Aus-  
 tria's breed

## X

Alas, alas ! it was not so this time  
 Conviction was not, courage failed,  
 and truth  
 Was something to be doubted of  
 The mime  
 Changed masks because a mime, the  
 tide as smooth  
 In running in as out, no sense of  
 crime  
 Because no sense of virtue Sudden  
 ruth

Seized on the people they  
 would have again  
 Their good Grand-duke, and leave  
 Guerazzi, though  
 He took that tax from Florence —  
 "Much in vain  
 He took it from the market-carts we  
 throw,  
 While urgent that no market-men  
 remain,  
 But all march off, and leave the spade  
 and plough  
 To die among the Lombards Was  
 it thus  
 The dear paternal Duke did? Live  
 the Duke!"  
 At which the joy-bells multitudi-  
 nous,  
 Swept by an opposite wind, as loudly  
 shook  
 Recall the mild Archbishop to his  
 house,  
 To bless the people with his frightened  
 look,  
 For he shall not be hanged yet, we  
 intend  
 Seize on Guerazzi, guard him in full  
 view,  
 Or else we stab him in the back, to  
 end  
 Rub out those chalked devices! Set  
 up new  
 The Duke's arms, doff your  
 Phrygian caps, and mend  
 The pavement of the piazzas broke into  
 By the bare poles of freedom!  
 Smooth the way  
 For the Duke's carriage, lest his high-  
 ness sigh  
 "Here trees of liberty grew yester-  
 day"  
 Long live the Duke!—How roared the  
 cannonry,  
 How rocked each campanile, and  
 through a spray  
 Of nosegays, wreaths, and kerchiefs,  
 tossed on high,  
 How marched the civic guard, the  
 people still  
 Shouting—especially the little boys!  
 Alas, poor people of an unfledged  
 will  
 Most fitly expressed by such a callow  
 voice!  
 Alas, still poorer Duke, incapable  
 Of being worthy even of that noise!

## XI

You think he came back instantly,  
 with thanks  
 And tears in his faint eyes, and hands  
 extended  
 To stretch the franchise through  
 their utmost ranks?  
 That having, like a father, appre-  
 hended,  
 He came to pardon fatherly those  
 pranks  
 Played out, and now in filial service  
 ended?—  
 That some love token, like a prince,  
 he threw,  
 To meet the people's love-call, in re-  
 turn?  
 Well, how he came I will relate to  
 you,  
 And if your hearts should burn, why,  
 hearts *must* burn,  
 To make the ashes which things old  
 and new  
 Shall be washed clean in—as this  
 Duke will learn

## XII

From Casa Guidi windows, gazing  
 then,  
 I saw and witness how the Duke came  
 back  
 The regular tramp of horse and  
 tread of men  
 Did smite the silence like an anvil  
 black  
 And sparkless With her wide eyes  
 at full strain,  
 Our Tuscan nurse exclaimed, "Alack,  
 alack,  
 Signora! these shall be the Aus-  
 trians" "Nay,  
 Hush hush," I answered, "do not  
 wake the child!"  
 For so my two-months' baby sleep-  
 ing lay  
 In milky dreams upon the bed and  
 smiled,  
 And I thought "he shall sleep on,  
 while he may,  
 Through the world's baseness Not  
 being yet defiled  
 Why should he be disturbed by  
 what is done?"  
 Then, gazing, I beheld the long-drawn  
 street  
 Live out from end to end, full in  
 the sun,

With Austria's thousands Sword  
and bayonet  
Horse, foot, artillery,—cannons  
rolling on,  
Like blind, slow storm-clouds gestant  
with the heat  
Of undeveloped lightnings, each  
bestrode  
By a single man, dust-white from  
head to heel,  
Indifferent as the dreadful thing he  
rode,  
Calm as a sculptured Fate, and ter-  
rible !  
As some smooth river which hath  
overflowed,  
Doth slow and silent down its current  
wheel  
A loosened forest, all the pines  
erect,—  
So, swept in mute significance of  
storm,  
The marshalled thousands,—not an  
eye deflect  
To left or right to catch a novel form  
Of the famed city adorned by archi-  
tect  
And carver, nor of Beauties live and  
warm  
Scared at the casements,—all,  
straightforward eyes  
And faces held as steadfast as their  
swords,  
And cognisant of acts, not imageries  
The key O Tuscans, too well fits the  
wards !  
Ye asked for mimes, these bring  
you tragedies—  
For purple, these shall wear it as your  
lords  
Ye played like children die like  
innocents !  
Ye mimicked lightnings with a torch  
the crack  
Of the actual bolt, your pastime,  
circumvents  
Ye called up ghosts, believing they  
were slack  
To follow any voice from Gilboa's  
tents,  
Here's Samuel !—and, so, Grand-  
dukes come back !

## XIII

And yet, they are no prophets  
though they come

That awful mantle they are drawing  
close,  
Shall be searched, one day, by the  
shafts of Doom,  
Through double folds now hoodwink-  
ing the brows  
Resuscitated monarchs disentomb  
Grave-reptiles with them, in their new  
life-throes  
Let such beware Behold, the  
people waits,  
Like God As He, in His serene of  
might,  
So they, in their endurance of long  
straits  
Ye stamp no nation out though day  
and night  
Ye tread them with that absolute  
heel which grates  
And grinds them flat from all attempt-  
ed height  
You kill worms sooner with a gar-  
den-spade  
Than you kill peoples peoples will  
not die,  
The tail curls stronger when you  
lop the head,  
They writhe at every wound and  
multiply,  
And shudder into a heap of life  
that's made  
Thus vital from God's own vitality  
'Tis hard to shrivel back a day of  
God's  
Once fixed for judgment 'tis as hard  
to change  
The people's, when they rise be-  
neath their loads  
And heave them from their backs  
with violent wrench,  
To crush the oppressor For that  
judgment rod's  
The measure of this popular re-  
venge

## XIV

Meantime, from Casa Guidi win-  
dows we  
Beheld the armament of Austria flow  
Into the drowning heart of Tuscany  
And yet none wept, none cursed, or,  
if 'twas so,  
They wept and cursed in silence  
Silently  
Our noisy Tuscans watched the in-  
vading foe,

They had learnt silence Pressed  
 against he wall  
 And grouped upon the church-steps  
 opposite,  
 A few pale men and women stared  
 at all  
 God knows what they were feeling,  
 with their white  
 Constrained faces !—they, so pro-  
 digal  
 Of cry and gesture when the world  
 goes right,  
 Or wrong indeed But here was  
 depth of wrong,  
 And here, still water they were silent  
 here  
 And through that sentient silence  
 struck along  
 That measured tramp from which it  
 stood out clear,  
 Distinct the sound and silence, like  
 a gong  
 Told upon midnight,—each made  
 awfuller,  
 While every soldier in his cap dis-  
 played  
 A leaf of olive Dusty, bitter thing !  
 Was such plucked at Novara, is it  
 said ?

xv

A cry is up in England, which doth ring  
 The hollow world through, that for  
 ends of trade  
 And virtue, and God's better worship-  
 ping,  
 We henceforth should exalt the  
 name of Peace,  
 And leave those rusty wars that eat  
 the soul,—  
 (Besides their clippings at our  
 golden fleece)  
 I, too, have loved peace, and from  
 bole to bole  
 Of immemorial, undeciduous trees,  
 Would write, as lovers use, upon a  
 scroll  
 The holy name of Peace, and set it  
 high  
 Where none should pluck it down  
 On trees, I say,—  
 Not upon gibbets !—With the  
 greenery  
 Of dewy branches and the flowery  
 May,  
 Sweet mediation twixt the earth  
 and sky,

Providing, for the shepherd's holiday !  
 Not upon gibbets !—though the  
 vulture leaves  
 Some quiet to the bones he first  
 picked bare  
 Not upon dungeons ! though the  
 wretch who grieves  
 And groans within, stirs not the outer  
 air  
 As much as little field-mice stir the  
 sheaves  
 Not upon chain-bolts ! though the  
 slave's despair  
 Has dulled his helpless, miserable  
 brain,  
 And left him blank beneath the free-  
 man's whip,  
 To sing and laugh out idiocies of  
 pain  
 Nor yet on starving homes ! where  
 many a lip  
 Has sobbed itself asleep through  
 curses vain !  
 I love no peace which is not fellowship,  
 And which includes not mercy I  
 would have  
 Rather, the raking of the guns across  
 The world, and shrieks against  
 Heaven's architrave  
 Rather, the struggle in the slippery  
 fosse,  
 Of dying men and horses, and the  
 wave  
 Blood-bubbling Enough said !  
 —By Christ's own cross,  
 And by the faint heart of my  
 womanhood,  
 Such things are better than a Peace  
 which sits  
 Beside the hearth in self-commend-  
 ed mood,  
 And takes no thought how wind and  
 rain by fits  
 Are howling out of doors against the  
 good  
 Of the poor wanderer What ! your  
 peace admits  
 Of outside anguish while it sits at  
 home ?  
 I loathe to take its name upon my  
 tongue—  
 It is no peace 'Tis treason, stiff  
 with doom,—  
 'Tis gagged despair, and inarticulate  
 wrong,  
 Annihilated Poland, stifled Rome,



Dazed Naples, Hungary fainting  
 'neath the thong  
 And Austria wearing a smooth  
 olive-leaf  
 On her brute forehead, while her hoofs  
 outpress  
 The life from these Italian souls,  
 in brief  
 O Lord of Peace, Who art Lord of  
 Righteousness,  
 Constrain the anguished worlds  
 from sin and grief  
 Pierce them with conscience, purge  
 them with redress,  
 And give us peace which is no  
 counterfeit !

xvi

But wherefore should we look out any  
 more  
 From Casa Guidi windows ? Shut  
 them straight,  
 And let us sit down by the folded door  
 And veil our saddened faces, and so,  
 wait  
 What next the judgment-heavens  
 make ready for  
 I have grown weary of these win-  
 dows Sights  
 Come thick enough and clear enough  
 with thought,  
 Without the sunshine, souls have  
 inner lights  
 And since the Grand-duke has come  
 back and brought  
 This army of the North which thus  
 requites  
 His filial South, we leave him to be  
 taught  
 His South, too, has learnt some-  
 thing certainly,  
 Whereof the practice will bring profit  
 soon,  
 And peradventure other eyes may  
 see,  
 From Casa Guidi windows, what is  
 done  
 Or undone Whatsoever deeds  
 they be,  
 Pope Pius will be glorified in none

xvii

Record that gain, Mazzini !—it  
 shall top  
 Some heights of sorrow Peter's rock,  
 so named  
 Shall lurs no vessel, any more, to  
 drop

Among the breakers Peter's chair  
 is shamed  
 Like any vulgar throne the nations  
 lop  
 To pieces for their firewood unre-  
 claimed,  
 And, when it burns too, we shall see  
 as well  
 In Italy as elsewhere Let it burn  
 The cross accounted still adorable  
 Is Christ's cross only !—if the thief's  
 would earn  
 Some stealthy genuflections we re-  
 bel,  
 And here the impenitent thief's has  
 had its turn,  
 As God knows, and the people on  
 their knees  
 Scoff and toss back the croziers  
 stretched like yokes  
 To press their heads down lower  
 by degrees  
 So Italy by means of these last  
 strokes,  
 Escapes the danger which preceded  
 these,  
 Of leaving captured hands in cloven  
 oaks  
 Of leaving very souls within the  
 buckle  
 Whence bodies struggled outward  
 of supposing  
 That freemen may like bondsmen  
 kneel and truckle,  
 And then stand up as usual, without  
 losing  
 An inch of stature  
 Those whom she-wolves suckle  
 Will bite as wolves do, in the grapple-  
 closing  
 Of adverse interests this, at last,  
 is known  
 (Thank Pius for the lesson) that  
 albeit,  
 Among the Popedom's hundred  
 heads of stone  
 Which blink down on you from the  
 roof's retreat  
 In Siena's tiger-striped cathedral,  
 —Joan  
 And Borgia 'mid their fellows you may  
 greet,  
 A harlot and a devil, you will see  
 Not a man, still less angel, grandly set  
 With open soul, to render man  
 more free

The fishers are still thinking of the  
net,  
And if not thinking of the hook too,  
we  
Are counted somewhat deeply in their  
debt  
But that's a rare case—so, by hook  
and crook  
They take the advantage, agonizing  
Christ  
By rustier nails than those of  
Cedron's brook,  
I' the people's body very cheaply  
priced,  
Quoting high priesthood out of Holy  
Book  
And buying death-fields with the  
sacrificed

## XVIII

Priests, priests!—there's no such  
name,—God's own, except  
Ye take most vainly Through  
Heaven's lifted gate  
The priestly ephod in sole glory  
swept  
When Chr st ascended, entered in, and  
sate  
With victor face sublimely over-  
wept  
At Deity's right hand, to mediate  
He alone, He for ever On His  
breast  
The Urim and the Thummim, fed with  
fire  
From the full Godhead flicker with  
the unrest  
Of human, pitiful heartbeats Come  
up higher  
All Christians! Levi's tribe is dis-  
possest!  
That solitary alb ye shall admire  
But not cast lots for The last  
chrism, poured right,  
Was on that Head, and poured for  
burial  
And not for domination in men's  
sight  
What are these churches? The old  
temple wall  
Doth overlook them juggling with  
the sleight  
Of surplice, candlestick, and altar-  
pall  
East church and West church, ay,  
North church and South,

B P

Rome's church and England's,—let  
them all repent  
And make concordats 'twixt their  
soul and mouth,  
Succeed St Paul by working at the  
tent  
Become infallible guides by speak-  
ing truth,  
And excommunicate their own pride  
that bent  
And cramped the souls of men  
Why, even here  
Priestcraft burns out, the twined  
linen blazes,  
Not like asbestos, to grow white  
and clear,  
But all to perish!—while the fire-  
smell raises  
To life some swooning spirits who,  
last year,  
Lost breath and heart in these church-  
stified places  
Why almost, through this Pius, we  
believed  
The priesthood could be an honest  
thing, he smiled  
So saintly while our corn was being  
sheaved

For his own granaries Showing now  
defiled  
His hireling hands, a better help's  
achieved  
Than if he blessed us shepherd-like  
and mild  
False doctrine, strangled by its own  
amen,  
Dies in the throat of all this nation  
Who  
Will speak a pope's name, as they  
rise again?  
What woman or what child will count  
him true?  
What dreamer praise him with the  
voice or pen?  
What man fight for him?—Pius has  
his due

## XIX

Record that gain, Mazzini!—Yes,  
but first  
Set down thy people's faults—set  
down the want  
Of soul-conviction, set down aims  
dispersed,  
And incoherent means, and valour  
scant

Z

Because of scanty faith, and  
schisms accursed  
That wrench these brother-hearts  
from covenant  
With freedom and each other Set  
down this  
And this, and see to overcome it when  
The seasons bring the fruits thou  
wilt not miss  
If wary Let no cry of patriot men  
Distract thee from the stern  
analysis  
Of masses who cry only keep thy  
ken  
Clear as thy soul is virtuous Heroes'  
blood  
Splashed up against thy noble brow  
in Rome —  
Let such not blind thee to the inter-  
lude  
Which was not also holy, yet did come  
'Twixt sacramental actions —  
brotherhood,  
Despised even there,—and something  
of the doom  
Of Remus, in the trenches Listen  
now—  
Rossi died silent near where Cæsar  
died  
He did not say, "My Brutus, is it  
thou?"  
Instead, rose Italy and testified,  
" 'Twas I, and I am Brutus—I  
avow "  
At which the whole world's laugh of  
scorn replied,  
"A poor maimed copy of Brutus!"  
Too much like,  
Indeed, to be so unlike Too un-  
skilled  
At Philippi and the honest battle-  
pike  
To be so skilful where a man is killed  
Near Pompey's statue, and the  
daggers strike  
At unawares i' the throat Was thus  
fulfilled  
An omen of great Michel Angelo,—  
When Marcus Brutus he conceived  
complete  
And strove to hurl him out by blow on  
blow  
Upon the marble, at Art's thunder-  
heat,  
Till haply some pre-shadow rising  
slow

Of what his Italy would fancy meet  
To be called BRUTUS, straight his  
plastic hand  
Fell back before his prophet soul, and  
left  
A fragment a maimed Brutus,  
—but more grand  
Than this, so named of Rome, was!  
Let thy weft  
Be of one woof and warp Mazzini!  
—stand  
With no man of a spotless fame  
bereft—  
Not for Italia! Neither stand  
apart  
No, not for the republic!—from those  
pure  
Brave men who hold the level of  
thy heart  
In patriot truth as lover and as doer,  
Albert they will not follow where  
thou art  
As extreme theorist Trust and dis-  
trust fewer,  
And so bind strong and keep un-  
stained the cause  
Which, at God's signal, war-trumps  
newly blown  
Shall yet annuntiate to the world's  
applause

## xx

Just now, the world is busy it has  
grown  
A Fair-going world Imperial  
England draws  
The flowing ends of the earth, from  
Fez Canton,  
Delhi and Stockholm, Athens and  
Madrid,  
The Russias and the vast Amer cas,  
As a queen gathers in her robes  
amid  
Her golden cincture,—isles, penin-  
sulas,  
Capes continents, far inland  
countries hid  
By jasper sands and hills of chrysc-  
prase  
All trailing in their splendours  
through the door  
Of the new Crystal Palace Every  
nation,  
To every other nation, strange of  
yore,  
Shall face to face give civic salutation,

And hold up in a proud right hand  
before  
That congress, the best work which  
she could fashion  
By her best means—"These corals,  
will you please  
To match against your oaks? They  
grow as fast  
Within my wilderness of purple  
seas"—  
"This diamond stared upon me as I  
passed  
(As a live god's eye from a marble  
frieze)  
Along a dark of diamonds Is it  
classed?"—  
"I wove these stuffs so subtly,  
that the gold  
Swims to the surface of the silk, like  
cream  
And curdles to fair patterns Ye  
behold!"—  
"These delicatèd muslins rather seem  
Than be, you think? Nay, touch  
them and be bold,  
Though such veiled Chakhi's face in  
Hafiz' dream"—  
"These carpets—you walk slow on  
them like kings,  
Inaudible like spirits while your foot  
Dips deep in velvet roses and such  
things"—  
"Even Apollonius might commend  
this flute"<sup>1</sup>  
The music, winding through the  
stops upsprings  
To make the player very rich Com-  
pute"—  
"Here's goblet-glass, to take in  
with your wine  
The very sun its grapes were ripened  
under  
Drink light and juice together, and  
each fine"—  
"This model of a steam-ship moves  
your wonder?  
You should behold it crushing down  
the brine,  
Like a blind Jove who feels his way  
with thunder"—

<sup>1</sup> Philostratus relates of Apollonius that he objected to the musical instrument of Linus the Rhodian, its incompetence to enrich and beautify. The history of music in our day, would, upon the former point, sufficiently confute the philosopher

"Here's sculpture! Ah, *we* live too! Why not throw  
Our life into our marbles? Art has place  
For other artists after Angelo"—  
"I tried to paint out here a natural face—  
For nature includes Raffael, as we know,  
Not Raffael nature Will it help my case?"—  
"Methinks you will not match this steel of ours!"—  
"Nor you this porcelain! One might think the clay  
Retained in it the larvæ of the flowers,  
They bud so, round the cup, the old spring way"—  
"Nor you these carven woods, where birds in bowers,  
With twisting snakes and climbing cupids, play"

## xxi

O Magi of the East and of the West,  
Your incense, gold, and myrrh are excellent—  
What gifts for Christ, then, bring ye with the rest?  
Your hands have worked well Is your courage spent  
In handwork only? Have you nothing best,  
Which generous souls may perfect and present,  
And He shall thank the givers for?  
No light  
Of teaching, liberal nations, for the poor,  
Who sit in darkness when it is not night?  
No cure for wicked children? Christ,  
—no cure!  
No help for women sobbing out of sight  
Because men made the laws? No brothel-lure  
Burnt out by popular lightnings?  
—Hast thou found  
No remedy, my England, for such woes?  
No outlet, Austria, for the scourged and bound,  
No entrance for the exiled? No repose,

Russia for knouted Poles worked  
underground,  
And gentle ladies bleached among the  
snows ? —  
No mercy for the slave America ? —  
No hope for Rome free France,  
chivalric France ? —  
Alas great nations have great  
shames, I say  
No pity O world, no tender utterance  
Of benediction, and prayers  
stretched this way  
To poor Italia baffled by mischance ? —  
O gracious nations, give some ear to  
me !  
You all go to your Fair, and I am one  
Who at the roadside of humanity  
Beseech your alms,—a justice to be  
done  
So, prosper !

XXII

In the name of Italy,  
Meantime, her patriot dead have  
benison !  
They only have done well, and  
what they did  
Being perfect it shall triumph Let  
them slumber  
No king of Egypt in a pyramid  
Is safer from oblivion, though he  
number  
Full seventy cerements for a cover-  
lid  
These Dead be seeds of life, and shall  
encumber  
The sad heart of the land until it  
loose  
The clammy clods and let out the  
spring-growth  
In beatific green through every  
bruise  
The tyrant should take heed to what  
he doth  
Since every victim-carrion turns  
to use,  
And drives a chariot, like a god made  
wroth,  
Against each piled injustice Ay,  
the least  
Dead for Italia, not in vain has died,  
However vainly, ere life's struggle  
ceased,  
To mad dissimilar ends they swerved  
aside  
Each grave her nationality has  
pieced

By its own noble breadth, and forti-  
fied  
And pinned it deeper to the soil  
Forlorn  
Of thanks, be, therefore, no one of  
these graves !  
Not hers—who, at her husband's  
side, in scorn,  
Outfaced the whistling shot and  
hissing waves,  
Until she felt her little babe unborn  
Recoil within her from the violent  
staves  
And bloodhounds of the world at  
which her life  
Dropt inwards from her eyes, and  
followed it  
Beyond the hunters Garibaldi's  
wife  
And child died so And now, the sea-  
weeds fit  
Her body like a proper shroud and  
coif  
And murmurously the ebbing waters  
grit  
The little pebbles while she lies  
interred  
In the sea-sand Perhaps, ere dying  
thus,  
She looked up in his face which  
never stirred  
From its clenched anguish, as to make  
excuse  
For leaving him for his, if so she  
erred  
Well he remembers that she could not  
choose  
A memorable grave ! Another is  
At Genoa where a king may fitly lie,—  
Who bursting that heroic heart of  
his  
At lost Novara, that he could not die,  
Though thrice into the cannon's  
eyes for this  
He plunged his shuddering steed, and  
felt the sky  
Reel back between the fire-shocks,  
—stripped away  
The ancestral ermine ere the smoke  
had cleared,  
And naked to the soul, that none  
might say  
His kingship covered what was base  
and bleared  
With treason, he went out an exile,  
yea,

An exiled patriot ! Let him be revered

## XXIII

Yea, verily, Charles Albert has died well

And if he lived not all so as one spoke,  
The sin pass softly with the passing bell

For he was shriven, I think, in cannon smoke,

And taking off his crown, made visible

A hero's forehead Shaking Austria's yoke

He shattered his own hand and heart " So best,"

His last words were upon his lonely bed,—

" I do not end like popes and dukes at least—

Thank God for it " And now that he is dead,

Admitting it is proved and manifest

That he was worthy, with a discrowned head,

To measure heights with patriots, let them stand

Beside the man in his Oporto shroud,  
And each vouchsafe to take him by the hand,

And kiss him on the cheek, and say aloud,

" Thou, too hast suffered for our native land !

My brother, thou art one of us Be proud "

## XXIV

Still, graves, when Italy is talked upon !

Still, still, the patriot's tomb, the stranger's hate

Still Niobe ! still fainting in the sun  
By whose most dazzling arrows violate

Her beauteous offspring perished !  
Has she won

Nothing but garlands for the graves,  
from Fate ?

Nothing but death-songs ?—Yet,  
be it understood,

Life throbs in noble Piedmont !  
while the feet

Of Rome's clay image, dabbled  
soft in blood,

Grow flat with dissolution, and, as meet,

Will soon be shovelled off, like other mud,

To leave the passage free in church and street

And I, who first took hope up in this song

Because a child was singing one behold,

The hope and omen were not, haply, wrong !

Poets are soothsayers still, like those of old

Who studied flights of doves,—and creatures young

And tender, mighty meanings, may unfold

## xxv

The sun strikes, through the windows, up the floor

Stand out in it, my own young Florentine

Not two years old, and let me see thee more !

It grows along thy amber curls, to shine

Brighter than elsewhere Now look straight before,

And fix thy brave blue English eyes on mine,

And from thy soul, which fronts the future so,

With unabashed and unabated gaze,  
Teach me to hope for, what the Angels know,

When they smile clear as thou dost  
Down God's ways,

With just alighted feet between the snow

And snowdrops, where a little lamb may graze,

Thou hast no fear, my lamb, about the road,

Albert in our vainglory we assume  
That, less than we have, thou hast learnt of God

Stand out, my blue-eyed prophet !—  
thou, to whom

The earliest world-day light that ever flowed,

Through Casa Guidi windows, chanced to come !

Now shake the glittering nimbus of thy hair,

And be God's witness,—that the  
 elemental  
 New springs of life are gushing  
 everywhere,  
 To cleanse the water courses, and pre-  
 vent all  
 Concrete obstructions which infest  
 the air !  
 —That earth's alive, and gentle or  
 ungentle  
 Motions within her, signify but  
 growth  
 The ground swells greenest o'er the  
 labouring moles  
 Howe'er the uneasy world is vexed  
 and wroth,  
 Young children, lifted high on parent  
 souls  
 Look round them with a smile upon  
 the mouth,  
 And take for music every bell that  
 tolls

Who said we should be better if like  
 these ?  
 And *we* despond we for the  
 future though  
 Posterity is smiling at our knees,  
 Convicting us of folly ? Let us go—  
 We will trust God The blank  
 interstices  
 Men take for runs, He will build into  
 With pillared marbles rare, or knit  
 across  
 With generous arches, till the fane's  
 complete  
 This world has no perdition, if some  
 loss  
 xxvi  
 Such cheer I gather from thy smiling,  
 Sweet !  
 The self-same cherub faces which  
 emboss  
 The rail, lean inward to the mercy-  
 seat

## AURORA LEIGH

(1857)

## FIRST BOOK

OF writing many books there is no  
 end,  
 And I who have written much in  
 prose and verse  
 For others' uses, will write now for  
 mine —  
 Will write my story for my better self,  
 As when you paint your portrait for a  
 friend,  
 Who keeps it in a drawer and looks  
 at it  
 Long after he has ceased to love you,  
 just  
 To hold together what he was and is  
 I, writing thus, am still what men call  
 young,  
 I have not so far left the coasts of life  
 To travel inland, that I cannot hear  
 That murmur of the outer Infinite  
 Which unweaned babies smile at in  
 their sleep  
 When wondered at for smiling, not so  
 far,  
 But still I catch my mother at her  
 post

Beside the nursery-door, with finger  
 up,  
 "Hush, hush—here's too much  
 noise !" while her sweet eyes  
 Leap forward, taking part against her  
 word  
 In the child's riot Still I sit and feel  
 My father's slow hand, when she had  
 left us both,  
 Stroke out my childish curls across his  
 knee,  
 And hear Assunta's daily jest (she  
 knew  
 He liked it better than a better jest)  
 Inquire how many golden scudi went  
 To make such ringlets O my father's  
 hand,  
 Stroke the poor hair down, stroke it  
 heavily,—  
 Draw, press the child's head closer to  
 thy knee !  
 I'm still too young, too young, to sit  
 alone  
 I write My mother was a Florentine,  
 Whose rare blue eyes were shut from  
 seeing me

|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
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| <p>When scarcely I was four years old,<br/> my life,<br/> A poor spark snatched up from a fail-<br/> ing lamp<br/> Which went out therefore She was<br/> weak and frail,<br/> She could not bear the joy of giving<br/> life—<br/> The mother's rapture slew her If her<br/> kiss<br/> Had left a longer weight upon my lips,<br/> It might have steadied the uneasy<br/> breath,<br/> And reconciled and fraternised my<br/> soul<br/> With the new order As it was, indeed<br/> I felt a mother-want about the world,<br/> And still went seeking, like a bleating<br/> lamb<br/> Left out at night, in shutting up the<br/> fold,—<br/> As restless as a nest-deserted bird<br/> Grown chill through something being<br/> away though what<br/> It knows not I, Aurora Leigh, was<br/> born<br/> To make my father sadder, and myself<br/> Not overjoyous, truly Women know<br/> The way to rear up children (to be<br/> just),<br/> They know a simple, merry, tender<br/> knack<br/> Of tying sashes, fitting baby-shoes,<br/> And stringing pretty words that make<br/> no sense,<br/> And kissing full sense into empty<br/> words,<br/> Which things are corals to cut life<br/> upon,<br/> Although such trifles children learn<br/> by such,<br/> Love's holy earnest in a pretty play,<br/> And get not over-early solemnised,—<br/> But seeing, as in a rose-bush, Love's<br/> Divine,<br/> Which burns and hurts not,—not a<br/> single bloom,—<br/> Become aware and unafraid of Love<br/> Such good do mothers Fathers love<br/> as well<br/> —Mine did, I know,—but still with<br/> heavier brains,<br/> And wills more consciously responsi-<br/> ble,<br/> And not as wisely, since less foolish-<br/> ly,</p> | <p>So mothers have God's licence to be<br/> missed<br/> My father was an austere Englishman,<br/> Who, after a dry life-time spent at<br/> home<br/> In college-learning, law, and parish<br/> talk<br/> Was flooded with a passion unaware,<br/> His whole provisioned and complacent<br/> past<br/> Drowned out from him that moment<br/> As he stood<br/> In Florence, where he had come to<br/> spend a month<br/> And note the secret of Da Vinci's<br/> drains,<br/> He musing somewhat absently perhaps<br/> Some English question whether<br/> men should pay<br/> The unpopular but necessary tax<br/> With left or right hand—in the alien<br/> sun<br/> In that great square of the Santissima,<br/> There drifted past him (scarcely<br/> marked enough<br/> To move his comfortable island-<br/> scorn),<br/> A train of priestly banners, cross and<br/> psalm,—<br/> The white-veiled rose-crowned maidens<br/> holding up<br/> Tall tapers, weighty for such wrists,<br/> aslant<br/> To the blue luminous tremor of the air,<br/> And letting drop the white wax as<br/> they went<br/> To eat the bishop's wafer at the<br/> church,<br/> From which long trail of chanting<br/> priests and girls,<br/> A face flashed like a cymbal on his<br/> face,<br/> And shook with silent clangour brain<br/> and heart,<br/> Transfiguring him to music Thus,<br/> even thus,<br/> He too received his sacramental gift<br/> With eucharistic meanings, for he<br/> loved<br/> And thus beloved, she died I've<br/> heard it said<br/> That but to see him in the first sur-<br/> prise<br/> Of widower and father, nursing me,</p> |
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Unmothered little child of four years  
 old,  
 His large man's hands afraid to touch  
 my curls,  
 As if the gold would tarnish,—his  
 grave lips  
 Contriving such a miserable smile,  
 As if he knew needs must, or I should  
 die,  
 And yet 'twas hard,—would almost  
 make the stones  
 Cry out for pity There's a verse he  
 set  
 In Santa Croce to her memory,  
 "Weep for an infant too young to  
 weep much  
 When death removed this mother"—  
 stops the mirth  
 To-day, on women's faces when they  
 walk  
 With rosy children hanging on their  
 gowns,  
 Under the cloister, to escape the sun  
 That scorches in the piazza After  
 which,  
 He left our Florence, and made haste  
 to hide  
 Himself, his prattling child, and  
 silent grief  
 Among the mountains above Pelago,  
 Because unmothered babes, he  
 thought, had need  
 Of mother nature more than others  
 use  
 And Pan's white goats, with udders  
 warm and full  
 Of mystic contemplations, come to  
 feed  
 Poor milkless lips of orphans like his  
 own—  
 Such scholar-scrap he talked, I've  
 heard from friends,  
 For even prosaic men, who wear grief  
 long,  
 Will get to wear it as a hat aside  
 With a flower stuck in't Father,  
 then, and child,  
 We lived among the mountains many  
 years,  
 God's silence on the outside of the  
 house,  
 And we, who did not speak too loud,  
 within,  
 And old Assunta to make up the fire,  
 Crossing herself whene'er a sudden  
 flame

Which lightened from the firewood,  
 made alive  
 That picture of my mother on the  
 wall  
 The painter drew it after she was dead,  
 And when the face was finished, throat  
 and hands,  
 Her cameriera carried him, in hate  
 Of the English-fashioned shroud, the  
 last brocade  
 She dressed in at the Pitti "He  
 should paint  
 No sadder thing than that," she swore,  
 "to wrong  
 Her poor signora" Therefore very  
 strange  
 The effect was I, a little child,  
 would crouch  
 For hours upon the floor, with knees  
 drawn up,  
 And gaze across them, half in terror,  
 half  
 In adoration, at the picture there,—  
 That swan-like supernatural white  
 life,  
 Just sailing upward from the red stiff  
 silk  
 Which seemed to have no part in it,  
 nor power  
 To keep it from quite breaking out of  
 bounds  
 For hours I sat and stared Assunta's  
 awe  
 And my poor father's melancholy eyes  
 Still pointed that way That way,  
 went my thoughts  
 When wandering beyond sight And  
 as I grew  
 In years, I mixed, confused, uncon-  
 sciously,  
 Whatever I last read or heard or  
 dreamed,  
 Abhorrent, admirable, beautiful,  
 Pathetical, or ghastly, or grotesque,  
 With still that face which did  
 not therefore change,  
 But kept the mystic level of all forms  
 And fears and admirations, was by  
 turns  
 Ghost, fiend, and angel, fairy, witch,  
 and sprite,—  
 A dauntless Muse who eyes a dread-  
 ful Fate,  
 A loving Psyche who loses sight of  
 Love,  
 A still Medusa, with mild milky brows

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| <p>             All curdled and all clothed upon with<br/>             snakes<br/>             Whose slime falls fast as sweat will,<br/>             or, anon,<br/>             Our Lady of the Passion, stabbed<br/>             with swords<br/>             Where the Babe sucked, or, Lamia in<br/>             her first<br/>             Moonlighted pallor, ere she shrunk<br/>             and blinked,<br/>             And, shuddering, wriggled down to<br/>             the unclean,<br/>             Or, my own mother, leaving her last<br/>             smile<br/>             In her last kiss, upon the baby-mouth<br/>             My father pushed down on the bed for<br/>             that,—<br/>             Or my dead mother, without smile or<br/>             kiss,<br/>             Buried at Florence All which images,<br/>             Concentred on the picture, glassed<br/>             themselves<br/>             Before my meditative childhood as<br/>             The incoherences of change and death<br/>             Are represented tully, mixed and<br/>             merged,<br/>             In the smooth fair mystery of per-<br/>             petual Life<br/> <br/>             And while I stared away my childish<br/>             wits<br/>             Upon my mother's picture (ah, poor<br/>             child !)<br/>             My father who through love had<br/>             suddenly<br/>             Thrown off the old conventions,<br/>             broken loose<br/>             From chin-bands of the soul, like<br/>             Lazarus,<br/>             Yet had no time to learn to talk and<br/>             walk<br/>             Or grow anew familiar with the sun,—<br/>             Who had reached to freedom, not to<br/>             action, lived,<br/>             But lived as one entranced, with<br/>             thoughts, not aims,—<br/>             Whom love had unmade from a com-<br/>             mon man<br/>             But not completed to an uncommon<br/>             man,—<br/>             My father taught me what he had<br/>             learnt the best<br/>             Before he died and left me,—grief and<br/>             love<br/>             And, seeing we had books among the<br/>             hills,           </p> | <p>             Strong words of counselling souls,<br/>             confederate<br/>             With vocal pines and waters,—out of<br/>             books<br/>             He taught me all the ignorance of men,<br/>             And how God laughs in heaven when<br/>             any man<br/>             Says, "Here I'm learned, this I<br/>             understand,<br/>             In that, I am never caught at fault or<br/>             doubt"<br/>             He sent the schools to school demon-<br/>             strating<br/>             A fool will pass for such through one<br/>             mistake<br/>             While a philosopher will pass for such,<br/>             Through said mistakes being ventured<br/>             in the gross<br/>             And heaped up to a system<br/> <br/>             I am like,<br/>             They tell me, my dear father Broader<br/>             brows<br/>             Howbeit, upon a slenderer under-<br/>             growth<br/>             Of delicate features,—paler, near as<br/>             grave,<br/>             But then my mother's smile breaks up<br/>             the whole,<br/>             And makes it better sometimes than<br/>             itself<br/> <br/>             So, nine full years, our days were hid<br/>             with God<br/>             Among His mountains I was just<br/>             thirteen,<br/>             Still growing like the plants from un-<br/>             seen roots<br/>             In tongue-tied Springs,—and sud-<br/>             denly awoke<br/>             To full life and its needs and agonies,<br/>             With an intense, strong, struggling<br/>             heart beside<br/>             A stone-dead father Life, struck<br/>             sharp on death,<br/>             Makes awful lightning His last<br/>             word was "Love—"<br/>             "Love, my child, love, love!"—(then<br/>             he had done with grief)<br/>             "Love, my child" Ere I answered<br/>             he was gone,<br/>             And none was left to love in all the<br/>             world<br/> <br/>             There, ended childhood what suc-<br/>             ceeded next<br/>             I recollect as, after fevers, men           </p> |
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Thread back the passage of delirium,  
 Missing the turn still, baffled by the  
 door,  
 Smooth endless days notched here  
 and there with knives,  
 A weary wormy darkness, spurred I'  
 the flank  
 With flame, that it should eat and end  
 itself  
 Like some tormented scorpion Then  
 at last,  
 I do remember clearly, how there  
 came  
 A stranger with authority, not right  
 (I thought not), who commanded,  
 caught me up  
 From old Assunta's neck, how, with a  
 shriek,  
 She let me go,—while I, with ears too  
 full  
 Of my father's silence, to shriek back  
 a word  
 In all a child's astonishment at  
 grief  
 Stared at the wharfrage where she  
 stood and moaned,  
 My poor Assunta, where she stood and  
 moaned!  
 The white walls, the blue hills, my  
 Italy,  
 Drawn backward from the shuddering  
 steamer-deck,  
 Like one in anger drawing back her  
 skirts  
 Which suppliants catch at Then the  
 bitter sea  
 Inexorably pushed between us both,  
 And sweeping up the ship with my  
 despair  
 Threw us out as a pasture to the stars  
 Ten nights and days we voyaged on  
 the deep,  
 Ten nights and days, without the com-  
 mon face  
 Of any day or night, the moon and  
 sun  
 Cut off from the green reconciling  
 earth,  
 To starve into a blind ferocity  
 And glare unnatural, the very sky  
 (Dropping its bell-net down upon the  
 sea  
 As if no human heart should scape  
 alive),  
 Bedraggled with the desolating salt,

Until it seemed no more that holy  
 heaven  
 To which my father went All new,  
 and strange—  
 The universe turned stranger for a  
 child  
 Then land!—then, England! oh the  
 frosty cliffs  
 Looked cold upon me Could I find a  
 home  
 Among those mean red houses through  
 the fog?  
 And when I heard my father's lan-  
 guage first  
 From alien lips which had no kiss for  
 mine  
 I wept aloud, then laughed, then  
 wept, then wept,—  
 And some one near me said the child  
 was mad  
 Through much sea-sickness The  
 train swept us on  
 Was this my father's England? the  
 great Isle?  
 The ground seemed cut up from the  
 fellowship  
 Of verdure, field from field, as man  
 from man,  
 The skies themselves looked low and  
 positive,  
 As almost you could touch them with  
 a hand  
 And dared to do it they were so far off  
 From God's celestial crystals, all  
 things, blurred  
 And dull and vague Did Shake-  
 speare and his mates  
 Absorb the light here?—not a hill or  
 stone  
 With heart to strike a radiant colour  
 up  
 Or active outline on the indifferent  
 air!  
 I think I see my father's sister stand  
 Upon the hall-step of her country-  
 house  
 To give me welcome She stood  
 straight and calm,  
 Her somewhat narrow forehead  
 braided tight  
 As if for taming accidental thoughts  
 From possible pulses, brown hair  
 pricked with grey  
 By frigid use of life (she was not old,

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| <p>Although my father's elder by a year),<br/>         A nose drawn sharply, yet in delicate<br/>           lines<br/>         A close mild mouth, a little soared<br/>           about<br/>         The ends, through speaking unre-<br/>           quoted loves<br/>         Or peradventure niggardly half-<br/>           truths,<br/>         Eyes of no colour,—once they might<br/>           have smiled<br/>         But never, never have forgot them-<br/>           selves<br/>         In smiling, cheeks, in which was yet<br/>           a rose<br/>         Of perished summers, like a rose in a<br/>           book,<br/>         Kept more for ruth than pleasure,—if<br/>           past bloom,<br/>         Past fading also<br/>               She had lived, we'll say,<br/>         A harmless life she called a virtuous<br/>           life,<br/>         A quiet life which was not life at all<br/>         (But that she had not lived enough to<br/>           know),<br/>         Between the vicar and the county<br/>           squires,<br/>         The lord-lieutenant looking down<br/>           sometimes<br/>         From the empyreal, to assure their<br/>           souls<br/>         Against chance-vulgarisms, and, in<br/>           the abyss<br/>         The apothecary looked on once a year,<br/>         To prove their soundness of humility<br/>         The poor-club exercised her Christian<br/>           gifts<br/>         Of knitting stockings, stitching petti-<br/>           coats,<br/>         Because we are of one flesh after all<br/>         And need one flannel (with a proper<br/>           sense<br/>         Of difference in the quality)—and still<br/>         The book-club guarded from your<br/>           modern trick<br/>         Of shaking dangerous questions from<br/>           the crease,<br/>         Preserved her intellectual She had<br/>           lived<br/>         A sort of cage-bird life, born in a cage,<br/>         Accounting that to leap from perch to<br/>           perch<br/>         Was act and joy enough for any bird<br/>         Dear heaven, how silly are the things<br/>           that live</p> | <p>In thickets and eat berries !<br/>               I, alas,<br/>         A wild bird scarcely fledged, was<br/>           brought to her cage,<br/>         And she was there to meet me Very<br/>           kind<br/>         Bring the clean water, give out the<br/>           fresh seed<br/>         She stood upon the steps to welcome<br/>           me<br/>         Calm, in black garb I clung about<br/>           her neck —<br/>         Young babes, who catch at every<br/>           shred of wool<br/>         To draw the new light closer, catch<br/>           and cling<br/>         Less blindly In my ears my father's<br/>           word<br/>         Hummed ignorantly as the sea in<br/>           shells<br/>         " Love, love, my child " She, black<br/>           there with my grief,<br/>         Might feel my love—she was his sister<br/>           once—<br/>         I clung to her A moment, she<br/>           seemed moved,<br/>         Kissed me with cold lips suffered me<br/>           to cling,<br/>         And drew me feebly through the hall,<br/>           into<br/>         The room she sat in<br/>           There with some strange spasm<br/>         Of pain and passion, she wrung loose<br/>           my hands<br/>         Imperiously and held me at arm's<br/>           length,<br/>         And with two grey-steel naked-bladed<br/>           eyes<br/>         Searched through my face—ay,<br/>           stabbed it through and through,<br/>         Through brows and cheeks and chin,<br/>           as if to find<br/>         A wicked murderer in my innocent face,<br/>         If not here there perhaps Then,<br/>           drawing breath<br/>         She struggled for her ordinary calm,<br/>         And missed it rather,—told me not to<br/>           shrink,<br/>         As if she had told me not to lie or<br/>           swear —<br/>         " She loved my father, and would love<br/>           me too<br/>         As long as I deserved it " Very kind.<br/>         I understood her meaning afterward .</p> |
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She thought to find my mother in my  
 face,  
 And questioned it for that For she,  
 my aunt,  
 Had loved my father truly, as she  
 could,  
 And hated, with the gall of gentle  
 souls,  
 My Tuscan mother, who had fooled  
 away  
 A wise man from wise courses, a good  
 man  
 From obvious duties and, depriving  
 her,  
 His sister, of the household pre-  
 cedence,  
 Had wronged his tenants, robbed his  
 native land,  
 And made him mad, alike by life and  
 death,  
 In love and sorrow She had pored for  
 years  
 What sort of woman could be suitable  
 To her sort of hate, to entertain it  
 with,  
 And so, her very curiosity  
 Became hate too, and all the idealism  
 She ever used in life, was used for  
 hate,  
 Till hate, so nourished, did exceed at  
 last  
 The love from which it grew, in  
 strength and heat,  
 And wrinkled her smooth conscience  
 with a sense  
 Of disputable virtue (say not, sin)  
 When Christian doctrine was enforced  
 at church

And thus my father's sister was to me  
 My mother's hater From that day,  
 she did  
 Her duty to me (I appreciate it  
 In her own word as spoken to herself),  
 Her duty, in large measure, well-  
 pressed out,  
 But measured always She was gener-  
 ous, bland,  
 More courteous than was tender, gave  
 me still  
 The first place,—as if fearful that  
 God's saints  
 Would look down suddenly and say,  
 "Herein  
 You missed a point, I think, through  
 lack of love"

Alas, a mother never is afraid  
 Of speaking angrily to any child,  
 Since love, she knows, is justified of  
 love

And I, I was a good child on the whole,  
 A meek and manageable child Why  
 not?

I did not live, to have the faults of life  
 There seemed more true life in my  
 father's grave

Than in all England Since *that*  
 threw me off

Who fain would cleave (his latest will,  
 they say,

Consigned me to his land), I only  
 thought

Of lying quiet there where I was  
 thrown

Like sea-weed on the rocks, and suffer  
 her

To prick me to a pattern with her pin,  
 Fibre from fibre, delicate leaf from

leaf,  
 And dry out from my drowned  
 anatomy

The last sea-salt left in me

So it was  
 I broke the copious curls upon my  
 head

In braids because she liked smooth-  
 ordered hair

I left off saying my sweet Tuscan  
 words

Which still at any stirring of the heart  
 Came up to float across the English

phrase,  
 As lilies (*Bene* or *che ch'e*), be-

cause  
 She liked my father's child to speak  
 his tongue

I learnt the collects and the cate-  
 chism,

The creeds, from Athanasius back to  
 Nice,

The Articles . the Tracts *against*  
 the times

(By no means Buonaventure's "Prick  
 of Love")

And various popular synopses of  
 Inhuman doctrines never taught by

John,

Because she liked instructed piety  
 I learnt my complement of classic

French  
 (Kept pure of Balzac and neologism),

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| <p>And German also, since she liked a<br/>range<br/>Of liberal education,—tongues, not<br/>books<br/>I learnt a little algebra, a little<br/>Of the mathematics,—brushed with<br/>extreme flounce<br/>The circle of the sciences, because<br/>She misliked women who are frivolous<br/>I learnt the royal genealogies<br/>Of Oviedo, the internal laws<br/>Of the Burmese empire, by how<br/>many feet<br/>Mount Chimborazo outsoars Him-<br/>meleh,<br/>What navigable river joins itself<br/>To Lara and what census of the year<br/>five<br/>Was taken at Klagenfurt,—because<br/>she liked<br/>A general insight into useful facts<br/>I learnt much music,—such as would<br/>have been<br/>As quite impossible in Johnson's day<br/>As still it might be wished—fine<br/>sleights of hand<br/>And unimagined fingering, shuffling<br/>off<br/>The hearer's soul through hurricanes<br/>of notes<br/>To a noisy Tophet, and I drew<br/>costumes<br/>From French engravings, nereids<br/>neatly draped,<br/>With smirks of simmering godship —<br/>I washed in<br/>From nature, landscapes (rather say,<br/>washed out)<br/>I danced the polka and Cellarius,<br/>Spunglass, stuffed birds and modelled<br/>flowers in wax,<br/>Because she liked accomplishments in<br/>girls<br/>I read a score of books on womanhood<br/>To prove, if women do not think at all,<br/>They may teach thinking (to a<br/>maiden-aunt<br/>Or else the author)—books demon-<br/>strating<br/>Their right of comprehending hus-<br/>band's talk<br/>When not too deep, and even of an-<br/>swering<br/>With pretty "may it please you," or<br/>"so it is,"—<br/>Their rapid insight and fine aptitude,</p> | <p>Particular worth and general mission-<br/>ariness,<br/>As long as they keep quiet by the fire<br/>And never say "no" when the world<br/>says "ay,"<br/>For that is fatal—their angelic reach<br/>Of virtue, chiefly used to sit and darn<br/>And fatten household sinners,—their,<br/>in brief,<br/>Potential faculty in everything<br/>Of abdicating power in it she owned<br/>She liked a woman to be womanly<br/>And English women, she thanked God<br/>and sighed<br/>(Some people always sigh in thanking<br/>God),<br/>Were models to the universe And<br/>last<br/>I learnt cross-stitch, because she did<br/>not like<br/>To see me wear the night with empty<br/>hands<br/>A-doing nothing So my shepherdess<br/>Was something after all (the pastoral<br/>saints<br/>Be praised for't) leaning lovelorn<br/>with pink eyes<br/>To match her shoes, when I mistook<br/>the silks,<br/>Her head uncrushed by that round<br/>weight of hat<br/>So strangely similar to the tortoise-<br/>shell<br/>Which slew the tragic poet<br/>By the way,<br/>The works of women are symbolical<br/>We sew, sew, prick our fingers, dull<br/>our sight,<br/>Producing what? A pair of slippers,<br/>sir,<br/>To put on when you're weary—or a<br/>stool<br/>To stumble over and vex you<br/>"curse that stool!"<br/>Or else at best, a cushion, where you<br/>lean<br/>And sleep and dream of something we<br/>are not,<br/>But would be for your sake Alas<br/>alas!<br/>This hurts most, this that, after<br/>all, we are paid<br/>The worth of our work, perhaps<br/>In looking down<br/>Those years of education (to return),<br/>I wonder if Brinvilliers suffered more</p> |
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| In the water-torture,                   | flood suc- | Than when we came the last time, she    |
| ceeding flood                           |            | will die "                              |
| To drench the incapable throat and      |            | " Will die " My cousin, Romney          |
| splilt the veins                        |            | Leigh blushed too,                      |
| Than I did Certain of your feeblér      |            | With sudden anger, and approaching      |
| souls                                   |            | me                                      |
| Go out in such a process, many pine     |            | Said low between his teeth—" You're     |
| To a sick, inodorous light, my own      |            | wicked now ?                            |
| endured                                 |            | You wish to die and leave the world     |
| I had relations in the Unseen, and      |            | a-dusk                                  |
| drew                                    |            | For others, with your naughty light     |
| The elemental nutriment and heat        |            | blown out ? "                           |
| From nature, as earth feels the sun at  |            | I looked into his face defyingly        |
| nights                                  |            | He might have known, that, being        |
| Or as a babe sucks surely in the        |            | what I was,                             |
| dark                                    |            | 'Twas natural to like to get away       |
| I kept the life, thrust on me, on the   |            | As far as dead folk can, and then in-   |
| outside                                 |            | deed                                    |
| Of the inner life, with all its ample   |            | Some people make no trouble when        |
| room                                    |            | they die                                |
| For heart and lungs, for will and in-   |            | He turned and went abruptly,            |
| tellect,                                |            | slammed the door                        |
| Inviolable by conventions God,          |            | And shut his dog out                    |
| I thank Thee for that grace of Thine !  |            | Romney, Romney Leigh                    |
| At first                                |            | I have not named my cousin hitherto     |
| I felt no life which was not patience,— |            | And yet I used him as a sort of friend, |
| did                                     |            | My elder by few years, but cold and     |
| The thing she bade me, without heed     |            | shy                                     |
| to a thing                              |            | And absent tender, when he              |
| Beyond it, sate in just the chair she   |            | thought of it,                          |
| placed,                                 |            | Which scarcely was imperative, grave    |
| With back against the window, to ex-    |            | betimes                                 |
| clude                                   |            | As well as early master of Leigh Hall,  |
| The sight of the great lime-tree on the |            | Whereof the nightmare sate upon his     |
| lawn                                    |            | youth                                   |
| Which seemed to have come on pur-       |            | Repressing all its seasonable delights, |
| pose from the woods                     |            | And agonising with a ghastly sense      |
| To bring the house a message,—ay,       |            | Of universal hideous want and wrong     |
| and walked                              |            | To incriminate possession When he       |
| Demurely in her carpeted low rooms,     |            | came                                    |
| As if I should not, hearkening my       |            | From college to the country, very oft   |
| own steps,                              |            | He crossed the hills on visits to my    |
| Misdoubt I was alive I read her         |            | aunt                                    |
| books,                                  |            | With gifts of blue grapes from the hot- |
| Was civil to her cousin, Romney         |            | houses,                                 |
| Leigh                                   |            | A book in one hand,—mere statistics     |
| Gave ear to her vicar, tea to her       |            | (if                                     |
| visitors,                               |            | I chanced to lift the cover), count of  |
| And heard them whisper when I           |            | all                                     |
| changed a cup                           |            | The goats whose beards are sprouting    |
| (I blushed for joy at that)—" The       |            | down toward hell,                       |
| Italian child,                          |            | Against God's separating judgment-      |
| For all her blue eyes and her quiet     |            | hour                                    |
| ways,                                   |            | And she she almost loved him,—even      |
| Thrives ill in England she is paler     |            | allowed                                 |
| yet                                     |            |                                         |

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| <p>That sometimes he should seem to<br/>         sigh my way,<br/>         It made him easier to be pitiful<br/>         And sighing was his gift So, undis-<br/>         turbed<br/>         At whiles she let him shut my music<br/>         up<br/>         And push my needles down, and lead<br/>         me out<br/>         To see in that south angle of the house<br/>         The figs grow black as if by a Tuscan<br/>         rock,<br/>         On some light pretext She would<br/>         turn her head<br/>         At other moments go to fetch a thing,<br/>         And leave me breath enough to speak<br/>         with him,<br/>         For his sake, it was simple<br/>         Sometimes too<br/>         He would have saved me utterly, it<br/>         seemed<br/>         He stood and looked so<br/>         Once, he stood so near<br/>         He dropped a sudden hand upon my<br/>         head<br/>         Bent down on woman's work, as soft<br/>         as rain—<br/>         But then I rose and shook it off as<br/>         fire,<br/>         The stranger's touch that took my<br/>         father's place<br/>         Yet dared seem soft<br/>         I used him for a friend<br/>         Before I ever knew him for a friend<br/>         'Twas better, 'twas worse also, after-<br/>         ward<br/>         We came so close, we saw our differ-<br/>         ences<br/>         Too intimately Always Romney<br/>         Leigh<br/>         Was looking for the worms I for the<br/>         gods<br/>         A godlike nature his, the gods look<br/>         down,<br/>         Incurious of themselves, and cer-<br/>         tainly<br/>         'Tis well I should remember, how,<br/>         those days<br/>         I was a worm too, and he looked on<br/>         me<br/>         A little by his act perhaps, yet more<br/>         By something in me, surely not my<br/>         will,<br/>         I did not die But slowly, as one in<br/>         swoon,</p> | <p>To whom life creeps back in the form<br/>         of death,<br/>         With a sense of separation, a blind<br/>         pain<br/>         Of blank obstruction, and a roar i' the<br/>         ears<br/>         Of visionary chariots which retreat<br/>         As earth grows clearer slowly,<br/>         by degrees,<br/>         I woke rose up where was I ? in<br/>         the world,<br/>         For uses, therefore, I must count<br/>         worth while<br/>         I had a little chamber in the house,<br/>         As green as any privet-hedge a bird<br/>         Might choose to build in, though the<br/>         nest itself<br/>         Could show but dead-brown sticks and<br/>         straws, the walls<br/>         Were green, the carpet was pure green,<br/>         the straight<br/>         Small bed was curtained greenly, and<br/>         the folds<br/>         Hung green about the window, which<br/>         let in<br/>         The out-door world with all its green-<br/>         ery<br/>         You could not push your head out<br/>         and escape<br/>         A dash of dawn-dew from the honey-<br/>         suckle,<br/>         But so you were baptized into the<br/>         grace<br/>         And privilege of seeing<br/>         First, the lime<br/>         (I had enough, there, of the lime, be<br/>         sure —<br/>         My morning-dream was often hummed<br/>         away<br/>         By the bees in it), past the lime, the<br/>         lawn<br/>         Which, after sweeping broadly round<br/>         the house,<br/>         Went trickling through the shrub-<br/>         berries in a stream<br/>         Of tender turf, and wore and lost<br/>         itself<br/>         Among the acacias, over which, you<br/>         saw<br/>         The irregular line of elms by the deep<br/>         lane<br/>         Which stopped the grounds and<br/>         dammed the overflow<br/>         Of arbutus and laurel Out of<br/>         sight</p> |
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The lane was, sunk so deep, no  
 foreign tramp  
 Nor drover of wild ponies out of Wales  
 Could guess if lady's hall or tenant's  
 lodge  
 Dispensed such odours,—though his  
 stick well-crook'd  
 Might reach the lowest trail of blos-  
 soming briar  
 Which dipped upon the wall Behind  
 the elms,  
 And through their tops, you saw the  
 folded hills  
 Striped up and down with hedges  
 (burly oaks  
 Projecting from the lines to show  
 themselves),  
 Through which my cousin Romney's  
 chimneys smoked  
 As still as when a silent mouth in frost  
 Breathes—showing where the wood-  
 lands hid Leigh Hall,  
 While, far above, a jut of table-land,  
 A promontory without water,  
 stretched —  
 You could not catch it if the days  
 were thick,  
 Or took it for a cloud but, otherwise  
 The vigorous sun would catch it up at  
 eve  
 And use it for an anvil till he had filled  
 The shelves of heaven with burning  
 thunderbolts  
 And proved he need not rest so early  
 —then,  
 When all his setting trouble was re-  
 solved  
 To a trance of passive glory, you  
 might see  
 In apparition on the golden sky  
 (All my Giotto's background!) the  
 sheep run  
 Along the fine clear outline, small as  
 mice  
 That run along a witch's scarlet  
 thread  
  
 Not a grand nature Not my chestnut-  
 woods  
 Of Vallombrosa, cleaving by the  
 spurs  
 To the precipices Not my headlong  
 leaps  
 Of waters, that cry out for joy or fear  
 In leaping through the palpitating  
 pines,

Like a white soul tossed out to eternity  
 With thrills of time upon it Not  
 indeed  
 My multitudinous mountains, sitting  
 in  
 The magic circle, with the mutual  
 touch  
 Electric, panting from their full deep  
 hearts  
 Beneath the influent heavens and  
 waiting for  
 Communion and commission Italy  
 Is one thing, England one  
 On English ground  
 You understand the letter ere  
 the fall,  
 How Adam lived in a garden All the  
 fields  
 Are tied up fast with hedges nosegay-  
 like,  
 The hills are crumpled plains,—the  
 plains, parterres,—  
 The trees, round, woolly, ready to be  
 clipped,  
 And if you seek for any wilderness  
 You find, at best, a park A nature  
 tamed  
 And grown domestic like a barn-door  
 fowl,  
 Which does not awe you with its claws  
 and beak,  
 Nor tempt you to an eyrie too high up,  
 But which in cackling, sets you think-  
 ing of  
 Your eggs to-morrow at breakfast, in  
 the pause  
 Of finer meditation  
 Rather say,  
 A sweet familiar nature stealing in  
 As a dog might, or child, to touch your  
 hand  
 Or pluck your gown, and humbly  
 mind you so  
 Of presence and affection, excellent  
 For inner uses, from the things with-  
 out  
  
 I could not be unthankful, I who was  
 Entreated thus and holpen In the  
 room  
 I speak of, ere the house was well  
 awake  
 And also after it was well asleep,  
 I sate alone and drew the blessing in  
 Of all that nature With a gradual  
 step,

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| <p>Astr among the leaves, a breath, a ray<br/>         It came in softly, while the angels<br/>             made<br/>         A place for it beside me   The moon<br/>             came<br/>         And swept my chamber clean of foolish<br/>             thoughts<br/>         The sun came, saying, " Shall I lift<br/>             this light<br/>         Against the lime-tree, and you will<br/>             not look ?<br/>         I make the birds sing—listen !<br/>             but, for you,<br/>         God never hears your voice, except-<br/>             ing when<br/>         You lie upon the bed at nights and<br/>             weep "</p> <p>Then, something moved me   Then, I<br/>             wakened up<br/>         More slowly than I verily write now,<br/>         But wholly 'at last, I wakened, opened<br/>             wide<br/>         The window and my soul, and let the<br/>             airs<br/>         And out-door sights sweep gradual<br/>             gospels in<br/>         Regenerating what I was   O Life,<br/>         How oft we throw it off and think,—<br/>             " Enough,<br/>         Enough of life in so much !—here's a<br/>             cause<br/>         For rapture,—herein we must break<br/>             with Life,<br/>         Or be ourselves unworthy, here we<br/>             are wronged<br/>         Maimed spoiled for aspiration   fare-<br/>             well Life ! "</p> <p>—And so, as froward babes, we hide<br/>             our eyes<br/>         And think all ended —Then, Life calls<br/>             to us<br/>         In some transformed, apocryphal,<br/>             new voice<br/>         Above us, or below us, or around<br/>         Perhaps we name it Nature's voice, or<br/>             Love's<br/>         Tricking ourselves, because we are<br/>             more ashamed<br/>         To own our compensations than our<br/>             griefs<br/>         Still, Life's voice !—still, we make our<br/>             peace with Life<br/>         And I, so young then, was not sullen<br/>             Soon</p> | <p>I used to get up early, just to sit<br/>         And watch the morning quicken in<br/>             the grey,<br/>         And hear the silence open like a<br/>             flower,<br/>         Leaf after leaf,—and stroke with list-<br/>             less hand<br/>         The woodbine through the window<br/>             till at last<br/>         I came to do it with a sort of love<br/>         At foolish unaware   whereat I<br/>             smiled,—<br/>         A melancholy smile, to catch myself<br/>         Smiling for joy<br/>                                         Capacity for joy<br/>         Admits temptation   It seemed, next,<br/>             worth while<br/>         To dodge the sharp sword set against<br/>             my life ,<br/>         To slip down stairs through all the<br/>             sleepy house<br/>         As mute as any dream there, and<br/>             escape<br/>         As a soul from the body, out of<br/>             doors,—<br/>         Glide through the shrubberies, drop<br/>             into the lane,<br/>         And wander on the hills an hour or<br/>             two,<br/>         Then back again before the house<br/>             should stir</p> <p>Or else I sate on in my chamber<br/>             green,<br/>         And lived my life, and thought my<br/>             thoughts and prayed<br/>         My prayers without the vicar, read<br/>             my books,<br/>         Without considering whether they<br/>             were fit<br/>         To do me good   Mark, there   We get<br/>             no good<br/>         By being ungenerous, even to a<br/>             book,<br/>         And calculating profits   so much<br/>             help<br/>         By so much reading   It is rather<br/>             when<br/>         We gloriously forget ourselves, and<br/>             plunge<br/>         Soul-forward headlong, into a book's<br/>             profound<br/>         Impassioned for its beauty and salt of<br/>             truth—<br/>         *Tis then we get the right good from a<br/>             book</p> |
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| I read much before                                | What my father taught | When any young wayfaring soul goes forth             |
| From many a volume, Love re-emphasised            |                       | Alone, unconscious of the perilous road,             |
| Upon the self-same pages Theophrast               |                       | The day-sun dazzling in his limpid eyes,             |
| Grew tender with the memory of his eyes,          |                       | To thrust his own way, he an alien, through          |
| And Ælian made mine wet The trick of Greek        |                       | The world of books ! Ah, you !—you think it fine,    |
| And Latin, he had taught me, as he would          |                       | You clap hands—"A fair day !"—you cheer him on,      |
| Have taught me wrestling or the game of fives     |                       | As if the worst could happen were to rest            |
| If such he had known,—most like a shipwrecked man |                       | Too long beside a fountain Yet, behold,              |
| Who heaps his single platter with goats' cheese   |                       | Behold !—the world of books is still the world ,     |
| And scarlet berries , or like any man             |                       | And worldlings in it are less merciful               |
| Who loves but one, and so gives all at once,      |                       | And more puissant For the wicked there               |
| Because he has it, rather than because            |                       | Are winged like angels Every knife that strikes,     |
| He counts it worthy Thus, my father gave ,        |                       | Is edged from elemental fire to assail               |
| And thus, as did the women formerly               |                       | A spiritual life The beautiful seems right           |
| By young Achilles, when they pinned the veil      |                       | By force of beauty, and the feeble wrong             |
| Across the boy's audacious front, and swept       |                       | Because of weakness Power is justified,              |
| With tuneful laughs the silver-fretted rocks,     |                       | Though armed against St Michael                      |
| He wrapt his little daughter in his large         |                       | Many a crown                                         |
| Man's doublet careless did it fit or no           |                       | Covers bald foreheads In the book-world, true,       |
|                                                   |                       | There's no lack, neither, of God's saints and kings, |
| But, after I had read for memory,                 |                       | That shake the ashes of the grave aside              |
| I read for hope The path my father's foot         |                       | From their calm locks, and undiscomfited             |
| Had trod me out, which suddenly broke off         |                       | Look steadfast truths against Time's changing mask   |
| (What time he dropped the wallet of the flesh     |                       | True, many a prophet teaches in the roads ,          |
| And passed), alone I carried on, and set          |                       | True, many a seer pulls down the flaming heavens     |
| My child-heart 'gainst the thorny underwood,      |                       | Upon his own head in strong martyrdom,               |
| To reach the grassy shelter of the trees          |                       | In order to light men a moment's space               |
| Ah, babe ! the wood, without a brother-babe !     |                       | But stay !—who judges ?—who distinguishes            |
| My own self-pity, like the redbreast bird,        |                       | 'Twixt Saul and Nahash justly, at first sight,       |
| Flies back to cover all that past with leaves     |                       | And leaves king Saul precisely at the sin,           |
| Sublimest danger, over which none weeps,          |                       |                                                      |

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| To serve king David ? who discerns at once                                      | But, even so, God saved me, and, being dashed                                   |
| The sound of the trumpets, when the trumpets blow                               | From error on to error, every turn                                              |
| For Alaric as well as Charlemagne ?                                             | Still brought me nearer to the central truth                                    |
| Who judges prophets, and can tell true seers                                    |                                                                                 |
| From conjurers ? The child, there ?                                             | I thought so All this anguish in the thick                                      |
| Would you leave                                                                 | Of men's opinions press and counterpress,                                       |
| That child to wander in a battle-field                                          | Now up, now down, now underfoot, and now                                        |
| And push his innocent smile against the guns ?                                  | Emergent all the best of it, perhaps,                                           |
| Or even in the catacombs, his torch                                             | But throws you back upon a noble trust                                          |
| Grown ragged in the fluttering air, and all                                     | And use of your own instinct,—merely proves                                     |
| The dark a-mutter round him ? not a child !                                     | Pure reason stronger than bare inference                                        |
| I read books bad and good—some bad and good                                     | At strongest Try it,—fix against heaven's wall                                  |
| At once good aims not always make good books                                    | The scaling ladders of school logic—mount                                       |
| Well-tempered spades turn up ill-smelling soils                                 | Step by step !—Sight goes faster ; that still ray                               |
| In digging vineyards, even books, that prove                                    | Which strikes out from you, how, you cannot tell,                               |
| God's being so definitely, that man's doubt                                     | And why, you know not (did you eliminate,                                       |
| Grows self-defined the other side the line,                                     | That such as you, indeed, should analyse ?)                                     |
| Made atheist by suggestion, moral books                                         | Goes straight and fast as light, and high as God                                |
| Exasperating to license, genial books,                                          |                                                                                 |
| Discounting from the human dignity, And merry books, which set you weeping when | The cygnet finds the water, but the man                                         |
| The sun shines,—ay, and melancholy books                                        | Is born in ignorance of his element, And feels out blind at first, disorganised |
| Which make you laugh that anyone should weep                                    | By sin i' the blood,—his spirit-insight dulled                                  |
| In this disjointed life, for one wrong more                                     | And crossed by his sensations Presently                                         |
| The world of books is still the world, I write,                                 | We feel it quicken in the dark sometimes,                                       |
| And both worlds have God's providence, thank God,                               | Then, mark, be reverent, be obedient,—                                          |
| To keep and hearten with some struggle, indeed,                                 | For those dumb motions of imperfect life                                        |
| Among the breakers, some hard swimming through                                  | Are oracles of vital Deity                                                      |
| The deeps—I lost breath in my soul sometimes                                    | Attesting the Hereafter Let who says                                            |
| And cried, " God save me if there's any God,"                                   | " The soul's a clean white paper," rather say,                                  |
|                                                                                 | A palimpsest, a prophet's holograph                                             |

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| Defiled, erased and covered by a monk's,—                                                 | Exaggerators of the sun and moon,<br>And soothsayers in a tea-cup ?                                                              |
| The Apocalypse, by a Longus ' por-<br>ing on                                              | I write so                                                                                                                       |
| Which obscene text, we may discern<br>perhaps                                             | Of the only truth-tellers, now left to<br>God,—                                                                                  |
| Some fair, fine trace of what was<br>written once,                                        | The only speakers of essential truth,<br>Opposed to relative, comparative,<br>And temporal truths, the only holders<br>by        |
| Some upstroke of an alpha and omega<br>Expressing the old scripture                       | His sun-skirts, through conventional<br>grey glooms,                                                                             |
| Books, books, books !                                                                     | The only teachers who instruct man-<br>kind                                                                                      |
| I had found the secret of a garret-<br>room                                               | From just a shadow on a charnel-wall,<br>To find man's veritable stature out,<br>Erect, sublime,—the measure of a<br>man,        |
| Piled high with cases in my father's<br>name,                                             | And that's the measure of an angel,<br>says                                                                                      |
| Piled high, packed large,—where,<br>creeping in and out                                   | The apostle Ay, and while your<br>common men                                                                                     |
| Among the giant fossils of my past,<br>Like some small nimble mouse be-<br>tween the ribs | Build pyramids, gauge railroads,<br>reign, reap, dine,<br>And dust the flaunty carpets of the<br>world                           |
| Of a mastodon, I nibbled here and<br>there                                                | For kings to walk on, or our senators,<br>The poet suddenly will catch them up<br>With his voice like a thunder                  |
| At this or that box, pulling through<br>the gap,                                          | " This is soul,                                                                                                                  |
| In heats of terror, haste, victorious<br>joy,                                             | This is life, this word is being said in<br>heaven,                                                                              |
| The first book first And how I felt it<br>beat                                            | Here's God down on us ! what are you<br>about ? "                                                                                |
| Under my pillow, in the morning's<br>dark                                                 | How all those workers start amid<br>their work,                                                                                  |
| An hour before the sun would let me<br>read !                                             | Look round, look up, and feel, a<br>moment's space,                                                                              |
| My books !                                                                                | That carpet-dusting, though a pretty<br>trade,                                                                                   |
| At last, because the time was ripe,<br>I chanced upon the poets                           | Is not the imperative labour after all                                                                                           |
| As the earth                                                                              | My own best poets, am I one with you,<br>That thus I love you,—or but one<br>through love ?                                      |
| Plunges in fury, when the internal<br>fires                                               | Does all this smell of thyme about my<br>feet                                                                                    |
| Have reached and pricked her heart,<br>and, throwing flat                                 | Conclude my visit to your holy hill<br>In personal presence, or but testify<br>The rustling of your vesture through<br>my dreams |
| The marts and temples, the triumphal<br>gates                                             | With influent odours ? When my joy<br>and pain,                                                                                  |
| And towers of observation, clears<br>herself                                              | My thought and aspiration, like the<br>stops                                                                                     |
| To elemental freedom—thus, my<br>soul,                                                    | Of pipe or flute, are absolutely dumb<br>If not melodious, do you play on me,                                                    |
| At poetry's divine first finger-touch,<br>Let go conventions and sprang up<br>surprised,  |                                                                                                                                  |
| Convicted of the great eternities<br>Before two worlds                                    |                                                                                                                                  |
| What's this, Aurora Leigh,<br>You write so of the poets, and not<br>laugh ?               |                                                                                                                                  |
| Those virtuous hars, dreamers after<br>dark,                                              |                                                                                                                                  |

My pipers,—and if, sooth, you did not  
 blow,  
 Would no sound come ? or is the  
 music mine,  
 As a man's voice or breath is called  
 his own,  
 Inbreathed by the Life-breather ?  
 There's a doubt  
 For cloudy seasons !

But the sun was high  
 When first I felt my pulses set them-  
 selves  
 For concord, when the rhythmic  
 turbulence  
 Of blood and brain swept outward  
 upon words,  
 As wind upon the alders, blanching  
 them  
 By turning up their under-natures  
 till  
 They trembled in dilation O delight  
 And triumph of the poet,—who  
 would say  
 A man's mere "yes," a woman's  
 common "no,"  
 A little human hope of that or this,  
 And says the word so that it burns  
 you through  
 With a special revelation, shakes the  
 heart  
 Of all the men and women in the  
 world,  
 As if one came back from the dead  
 and spoke,  
 With eyes too happy, a familiar thing  
 Become divine !' the utterance !  
 while for him  
 The poet, the speaker, he expands  
 with joy ;  
 The palpitating angel in his flesh  
 Thrills inly with consenting fellow-  
 ship  
 To those innumerable spirits who sun  
 themselves  
 Outside of time.

O life, O poetry,  
 —Which means life in life ! cognisant  
 of life  
 Beyond this blood-beat,—passionate  
 for truth  
 Beyond these senses,—poetry, my  
 life,—  
 My eagle, with both grappling feet  
 still hot  
 From Zeus's thunder, who has rav-  
 ished me

Away from all the shepherds, sheep,  
 and dogs,  
 And set me in the Olympian roar  
 and round  
 Of lumincous faces, for a cup-bearer,  
 To keep the mouths of all the god-  
 heads moist  
 For everlasting laughter,—I, myself,  
 Half drunk across the beaker, with  
 their eyes !

How those gods look !

Enough so, Ganymede  
 We shall not bear above a round or  
 two—

We drop the golden cup at Here's foot  
 And swoon back to the earth,—and  
 find ourselves

Face-down among the pine-cones,  
 cold with dew,

While the dogs bark, and many a  
 shepherd scoffs,

"What's come now to the youth ?"  
 Such ups and downs

Have poets

Am I such indeed ? The name  
 Is royal, and to sign it like a queen,  
 Is what I dare not,—though some  
 royal blood

Would seem to tingle in me now and  
 then,

With sense of power and ache,—with  
 imposthumes

And manias usual to the race How-  
 beit

I dare not, 'tis too easy to go mad,  
 And ape a Bourbon in a crown of  
 straws,

The thing's too common

Many fervent souls  
 Strike rhyme on rhyme, who would  
 strike steel on steel

If steel had offered, in a restless heat  
 Of doing something Many tender  
 souls

Have strung their losses on a rhyming  
 thread,

As children, cowslips —the more  
 pains they take,

The work more withers Young men,  
 ay, and maids,

Too often sow their wild oats in tame  
 verse,

Before they sit down under their own  
 vine

And live for use Alas, near all the  
 birds

|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
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| <p>Will sing at dawn,—and yet we do not<br/>take<br/>The chattering swallow for the holy<br/>lark</p> <p>In those days, though, I never analysed,<br/>Not even myself Analysis comes late<br/>You catch a sight of Nature, earliest,<br/>In full front sun-face, and your eyelids wink<br/>And drop before the wonder of 't,<br/>you miss<br/>The form, through seeing the light I<br/>lived, those days,<br/>And wrote because I lived—unlicensed<br/>else<br/>My heart beat in my brain Life's<br/>violent flood<br/>Abolished bounds—and, which my<br/>neighbour's field,<br/>Which mine, what mattered? It is<br/>so in youth<br/>We play at leap-frog over the god<br/>Term<br/>The love within us and the love without<br/>Are mixed, confounded, if we are<br/>loved or love<br/>We scarce distinguish So with other<br/>power<br/>Being acted on and acting seem the<br/>same<br/>In that first onrush of life's chariot-<br/>wheels,<br/>We know not if the forests move or we<br/>And so, like most young poets, in a<br/>flush<br/>Of individual life, I poured myself<br/>Along the veins of others, and<br/>achieved<br/>Here lifeless imitations of live verse,<br/>And made the living answer for the<br/>dead,<br/>Profaning nature "Touch not, do<br/>not taste,<br/>Nor handle"—we're too legal, who<br/>write young<br/>We beat the phorminx till we hurt our<br/>thumbs,<br/>As if still ignorant of counterpoint<br/>We call the Muse "O Muse,<br/>benign Muse!"—<br/>As if we had seen her purple-braided<br/>head</p> | <p>With the eyes in it, start between the<br/>boughs<br/>As often as a stag's What make-<br/>believe,<br/>With so much earnest! what effete<br/>results,<br/>From virile efforts! what cold wire-<br/>drawn odes<br/>From such white heats!—bucolics,<br/>where the cows<br/>Would scare the writer if they splashed<br/>the mud<br/>In lashing off the flies,—didactics,<br/>driven<br/>Against the heels of what the master<br/>said,<br/>And counterfeiting epics, shrill with<br/>trumps<br/>A babe might blow between two<br/>straining cheeks<br/>Of bubbled rose, to make his mother<br/>laugh,<br/>And elegiac griefs, and songs of<br/>love,<br/>Like cast-off nosegays picked up on<br/>the road,<br/>The worse for being warm all these<br/>things, writ<br/>On happy mornings, with a morning<br/>heart,<br/>That leaps for love, is active for<br/>resolve,<br/>Weak for art only Oft, the ancient<br/>forms<br/>Will thrill, indeed, in carrying the<br/>young blood<br/>The wine-skins, now and then, a little<br/>waiped,<br/>Will crack even, as the new wine<br/>gurgles in<br/>Spare the old bottles!—spill not the<br/>new wine<br/><br/>By Keats's soul, the man who never<br/>stepped<br/>In gradual progress like another man,<br/>But, turning grandly on his central<br/>self,<br/>Ensphered himself in twenty perfect<br/>years<br/>And died, not young, (the life of a<br/>long life,<br/>Distilled to a mere drop, falling like a<br/>tear<br/>Upon the world's cold cheek to make<br/>it burn</p> |
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For ever,) by that strong excepted  
soul,  
I count it strange, and hard to under-  
stand,  
That nearly all young poets should  
write old,  
That Pope was sexagenarian at six-  
teen,  
And beardless Byron academical,  
And so with others It may be, per-  
haps,  
Such have not settled long and deep  
enough  
In trance, to attain to clairvoyance,—  
and still  
The memory mixes with the vision,  
spoils,  
And works it turbid  
Or perhaps, again,  
In order to discover the Muse-Sphinx  
The melancholy desert must sweep  
round,  
Behind you, as before —  
For me, I wrote  
False poems, like the rest, and  
thought them true  
Because myself was true in writing  
them  
I, peradventure, have writ true ones  
since  
With less complacence  
But I could not hide  
My quickening inner life from those at  
watch  
They saw a light at a window now and  
then,  
They had not set there Who had set  
it there?  
My father's sister started when she  
caught  
My soul agaze in my eyes She could  
not say  
I had no business with a sort of soul,  
But plainly she objected,—and  
demurred,  
That souls were dangerous things to  
carry straight  
Through all the spilt saltpetre of the  
world  
She said sometimes, "Aurora, have  
you done  
Your task this morning?—Have you  
read that book?  
And are you ready for the crochet  
here?"

As if she said, "I know there's some-  
thing wrong,  
I know I have not ground you down  
enough  
To flatten and bake you to a whole-  
some crust  
For household uses and proprieties,  
Before the rain has got into my barn  
And set the grams a-sprouting What,  
you're green  
With out-door impudence? you al-  
most grow?"  
To which I answered, "Would she  
hear my task,  
And verify my abstract of the book?  
And should I sit down to the crochet  
work?"  
Was such her pleasure?" Then  
I sate and teased  
The patient needle till it spilt the  
thread,  
Which oozed off from it in meander-  
ing lace  
From hour to hour I was not, there-  
fore sad,  
My soul was singing at a work apart  
Behind the wall of sense, as safe from  
harm  
As sings the lark when sucked up out  
of sight,  
In vortices of glory and blue air  
And so, through forced work and  
spontaneous work,  
The inner life informed the outer life,  
Reduced the irregular blood to settled  
rhythms,  
Made cool the forehead with fresh-  
sprinkling dreams,  
And, rounding to the spheric soul the  
thin  
Pined body, struck a colour up the  
cheeks,  
Though somewhat faint I clenched  
my brows across  
My blue eyes greatingening in the look-  
ing-glass,  
And said, "We'll live Aurora! we'll  
be strong  
The dogs are on us—but we will not  
die"  
Whoever lives true life, will love true  
love,  
I learnt to love that England Very  
oft,



Before the day was born or otherwise  
 Through secret windings of the after-  
   noons,  
 I threw my hunters off and plunged  
   myself  
 Among the deep hills, as a hunted  
   stag  
 Will take the waters, shivering with  
   the fear  
 And passion of the course And  
   when, at last  
 Escaped,—so many a green slope  
   built on slope  
 Betwixt me and the enemy's house  
   behind,  
 I dared to rest, or wander,—like a  
   rest  
 Made sweeter for the step upon the  
   grass,—  
 And view the ground's most gentle  
   dimplement  
 (As if God's finger touched but did  
   not press  
 In making England !), such an up and  
   down  
 Of verdure,—nothing too much up or  
   down,  
 A ripple of land, such little hills, the  
   sky  
 Can stoop to tenderly and the wheat-  
   fields clumb,  
 Such nooks of valleys, lined with or-  
   chises,  
 Fed full of noises by invisible streams,  
 And open pastures, where you scarcely  
   tell  
 White daisies from white dew,—at  
   intervals  
 The mythic oaks and elm-trees stand-  
   ing out  
 Self-poised upon their prodigy of  
   shade,—  
 I thought my father's land was worthy  
   too  
 Of being my Shakespeare's  
                                 Very oft alone,  
 Unlicensed, not unfrequently with  
   leave  
 To walk the third with Romney and  
   his friend  
 The rising painter, Vincent Carring-  
   ton,  
 Whom men judge hardly, as bee-  
   bonneted,  
 Because he holds that, paint a body  
   well

You paint a soul by implication, like  
 The grand first Master Pleasant  
   walks<sup>1</sup> for if  
 He said    " When I was last in  
   Italy "

It sounded as an instrument that's  
   played  
 Too far off for the tune—and yet it's  
   fine  
 To listen

                Often we walked only two,  
 If cousin Romney pleased to walk  
   with me  
 We read, or talked, or quarrelled, as it  
   chanced  
 We were not lovers, nor even friends  
   well-matched—  
 Say rather, scholars upon different  
   tracks,  
 And thinkers disagreed, he, overfull  
 Of what is, and I, haply, overbold  
 For what might be

                But then the thrushes sang,  
 And shook my pulses and the elms'  
   new leaves —  
 At which I turned, and held my finger  
   up,  
 And bade him mark that, howsoe'er  
   the world  
 Went ill, as he related, certainly  
 The thrushes still sang in it—At  
   which word  
 His brow would soften,—and he bore  
   with me

In melancholy patience not unkind,  
 While breaking into voluble ecstasy,  
 I flattered all the beauteous country  
   round,  
 As poets use       the skies, the  
   clouds, the fields,  
 The happy violets hiding from the  
   roads  
 The primroses run down to, carrying  
   gold,—  
 The tangled hedgerows, where the  
   cows push out  
 Impatient horns and tolerant churn-  
   ing mouths  
 'Twixt dripping ash-boughs,—hedge-  
   rows all alive  
 With birds and gnats and large white  
   butterflies  
 Which look as if the May-flower had  
   caught life  
 And palpitated forth upon the  
   wind,—

Hills, vales, woods, netted in a silver  
mist,  
Farms, granges, doubled up among  
the hills,  
And cattle grazing in the watered  
vales,  
And cottage-chimneys smoking from  
the woods,  
And cottage-gardens smelling every-  
where,  
Confused with smell of orchards  
"See" I said,  
'And see' is God not with us on the  
earth?  
And shall we put Him down by aught  
we do?  
Who says there's nothing for the poor  
and vile  
Save poverty and wickedness? be-  
hold!"  
And ankle-deep in English grass I  
leaped  
And clapped my hands, and called all  
very fair  
  
In the beginning when God called all  
good  
Even then, was evil near us, it is writ  
But we, indeed, who call things good  
and fair,  
The evil is upon us while we speak,  
"Deliver us from evil", let us pray

## SECOND BOOK

TIMES followed one another    Came a  
morn  
I stood upon the brink of twenty  
years,  
And looked before and after, as I  
stood  
Woman and artist—either incom-  
plete,  
Both credulous of completion    There  
I held  
The whole creation in my little cup,  
And smiled with thirsty lips before I  
drank,  
"Good health to you and me, sweet  
neighbour mine,  
And all these peoples"  
I was glad, that day,  
The June was in me, with its multi-  
tudes  
Of nightingales all singing in the dark,  
And rosebuds reddening where the  
calyx split  
I felt so young, so strong, so sure of  
God!  
So glad I could not choose be very  
wise!  
And old at twenty, was inclined to  
pull  
My childhood backward in a childish  
jest  
To see the face of 't once more, and  
farewell!  
In which fantastic mood I bounded  
forth  
At early morning, would not wait so  
long  
As even to snatch my bonnet by the  
strings,  
But, brushing a green trail across the  
lawn  
With my gown in the dew, took will  
and way  
Among the acacias of the shrubberies,  
To fly my fancies in the open air  
And keep my birthday, till my aunt  
awoke  
To stop good dreams    Meanwhile I  
murmured on,  
As honeyed bees keep humming to  
themselves,  
"The worthiest poets have remained  
uncrowned  
Till death has bleached their fore-  
heads to the bone,  
And so with me it must be, unless I  
prove  
Unworthy of the grand adversity —  
And certainly I would not fail so  
much  
What therefore, if I crown myself to-  
day  
In sport, not pride, to learn the feel of  
it,  
Before my brows be numb as Dante's  
own  
To all the tender pricking of such  
leaves?  
Such leaves! what leaves?"  
I pulled the branches down  
To choose from  
"Not the bay! I choose no bay,  
The fates deny us if we are overbold  
Nor myrtle—which means chiefly  
love, and love  
Is something awful which one dares  
not touch

So early o' mornings This verberna  
 strains  
 The point of passionate fragrance,  
 and hard by,  
 This guelder-rose, at far too slight a  
 beck  
 Of the wind, will toss about her  
 flower-apples  
 Ah—there's my choice!—that ivy on  
 the wall,  
 That headlong ivy! not a leaf will  
 grow  
 But thinking of a wreath Large  
 leaves, smooth leaves,  
 Serrated like my vines, and half as  
 green  
 I like such ivy, bold to leap a height  
 'Twas strong to climb! as good to  
 grow on graves  
 As twist about a thyrsus, pretty too  
 (And that's not ill) when twisted  
 round a comb"

Thus speaking to myself, half singing  
 it  
 Because some thoughts are fashioned  
 like a bell  
 To ring with once being touched, I  
 drew a wreath  
 Drenched, blinding me with dew,  
 across my brow,  
 And fastening it behind so,  
 turning faced  
 . My public!—cousin Romney—  
 with a mouth  
 Twice graver than his eyes  
 I stood there fixed—  
 My arms up, like the caryatid sole  
 Of some abolished temple, helplessly  
 Persistent in a gesture which derides  
 A former purpose Yet my blush  
 was flame  
 As if from flax, not stone  
 "Aurora Leigh,  
 The earliest of Auroras!"  
 Hand stretched out  
 I clasped, as shipwrecked men will  
 clasp a hand,  
 Indifferent to the sort of palm The  
 tide  
 Had caught me at my pastime, writ-  
 ing down  
 My foolish name too near upon the  
 sea  
 Which drowned me with a blush as  
 foolish "You,

My cousin!"

The smile died out in his eyes  
 And dropped upon his lips, a cold  
 dead weight,  
 For just a moment "Here's a  
 book, I found!"  
 No name writ on it—poems, by the  
 form,  
 Some Greek upon the margin,—  
 lady's Greek,  
 Without the accents Read it? Not  
 a word  
 I saw at once the thing had witch-  
 craft in't,  
 Whereof the reading calls up danger-  
 ous spirits,  
 I rather bring it to the witch!"  
 "My book!"

You found it"

"In the hollow by the stream  
 That beech leans down into—of  
 which you said,  
 The Oread in it has a Naiad's heart  
 And pines for waters"  
 "Thank you"

"Thanks to you,  
 My cousin! that I have seen you not  
 too much  
 Witch, scholar, poet, dreamer, and  
 the rest,  
 To be a woman also"

With a glance  
 The smile rose in his eyes again, and  
 touched  
 The ivy on my forehead, light as air  
 I answered gravely "Poets needs  
 must be

Or men or women—more's the pity!"  
 "Ah,  
 But men, and still less women, hap-  
 pily  
 Scarce need oe poets Keep to the  
 green wreath,  
 Since even dreaming of the stone and  
 bronze

Brings headaches, pretty cousin, and  
 defiles  
 The clean white morning dresses"

"So you judge!"  
 Because I love the beautiful, I must  
 Love pleasure chiefly, and be over-  
 charged  
 For ease and whiteness! Well—you  
 know the world,  
 And only miss your cousin, 'tis not  
 much!—

But learn this I would rather take  
 my part  
 With God's Dead, who afford to walk  
 in white  
 Yet spread His glory, than keep quiet  
 here,  
 And gather up my feet from even a  
 step,  
 For fear to soil my gown in so much  
 dust  
 I choose to walk at all risks —Here, if  
 heads  
 That hold a rhythmic thought, must  
 ache perforce,  
 For my part, I choose headaches,—  
 and to-day's  
 My birthday "

" Dear Aurora, choose instead  
 To cure them You have balsams "

" I perceive  
 The headache is too noble for my sex  
 You think the headache would sound  
 decenter,  
 Since that's the woman's special,  
 proper ache,  
 And altogether tolerable, except  
 To a woman "

Saying which, I loosed my wreath  
 and, swinging it beside me as I  
 walked,  
 Half petulant, half playful, as we  
 walked,  
 I sent a sidelong look to find his  
 thought,—  
 As falcon set on falconer's finger may,  
 With sidelong head, and startled,  
 braving eye,  
 Which means, " You'll see—you'll  
 see ! I'll soon take flight—  
 You shall not hinder " He, as shak-  
 ing out  
 His hand and answering " Fly then,"  
 did not speak,  
 Except by such a gesture Silently  
 We paced, until, just coming into  
 sight  
 Of the house-windows, he abruptly  
 caught  
 At one end of the swinging wreath,  
 and said  
 " Aurora ! " There I stopped short,  
 breath and all  
 " Aurora, let's be serious, and throw  
 by  
 This game of head and heart Life  
 means, be sure,

Both heart and head,—both active,  
 both complete,  
 And both in earnest Men and  
 women make  
 The world, as head and heart make  
 human life  
 Work man, work woman, since there's  
 work to do  
 In this beleaguered earth, for head  
 and heart,  
 And thought can never do the work  
 of love !  
 But work for ends I mean for uses ,  
 not  
 For such sleek fringes (do you call  
 them ends ?  
 Still less God's glory) as we sew our-  
 selves  
 Upon the velvet of those baldaquins  
 Held 'twixt us and the sun That  
 book of yours,  
 I have not read a page of , but I toss  
 A rose up—it falls calyx down, you  
 see !  
 The chances are that, being a woman,  
 young  
 And pure, with such a pair of large,  
 calm eyes,  
 You write as well and ill  
 upon the whole,  
 As other women If as well, what  
 then ?  
 If even a little better, still,  
 what then ?  
 We want the Best in art now, or no  
 art  
 The time is done for facile settings up  
 Of minnow gods, nymphs here, and  
 tritons there ,  
 The polytheists have gone out in God,  
 That unity of Bests No best, no  
 God !—  
 And so with art, we say Give art's  
 divine,  
 Direct, indubitable real as grief,—  
 Or leave us to the grief we grow our-  
 selves  
 Divine by overcoming with mere hope  
 And most prosaic patience You  
 you are young  
 As Eve with nature's daybreak on her  
 face ,  
 But this same world you are come to,  
 dearest coz,  
 Has done with keeping birthdays,  
 saves her wreaths

|                                                                                       |                                                       |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------|
| To hang upon her ruins,—and forgets                                                   | Beside that gate, perhaps You gather up               |
| To rhyme the cry with which she still beats back                                      | A few such cases, and, when strong, sometimes         |
| Those savage hungry dogs that hunt her down                                           | Will write of factories and of slaves, as if          |
| To the empty grave of Christ The world's hard pressed,                                | Your father were a negro, and your son                |
| The sweat of labour in the early curse Has (turning acrid in six thousand years)      | A spinner in the mills All's yours and you,—          |
| Become the sweat of torture Who has time,                                             | All, coloured with your blood, or otherwise           |
| An hour's time think ! to sit upon a bank                                             | Just nothing to you Why, I call you hard              |
| And hear the cymbal tinkle in white hands ?                                           | To general suffering Here's the world half blind      |
| When Egypt's slain, I say, let Miriam sing !—                                         | With intellectual light, half brutalised              |
| Before where's Moses ? "                                                              | With civilisation, having caught the plague           |
| " Ah—exactly that !                                                                   | In silks from Tarsus, shrieking east and west         |
| Where's Moses ?—is a Moses to be found ?—                                             | Along a thousand railroads, mad with pain             |
| You'll seek him vainly in the bul-rushes,                                             | And sin too ! does one woman of you all               |
| While I in vain touch cymbals Yet, concede,                                           | (You who weep easily) grow pale to see                |
| Such sounding brass has done some actual good                                         | This tiger shake his cage ?—does one of you           |
| (The application in a woman's hand, If that were credible, being scarcely spoilt,)    | Stand still from dancing, stop from stringing pearls, |
| In colonising beehives "                                                              | And pine and die, because of the great sum            |
| " There it is !—                                                                      | Of universal anguish ?—Show me a tear                 |
| You play beside a death-bed like a child,                                             | Wet as Cordelia's, in eyes bright as yours,           |
| Yet measure to yourself a prophet's place                                             | Because the world is mad ! You cannot count,          |
| To teach the living None of all these things,                                         | That you should weep for this account, not you !      |
| Can women understand You generalise                                                   | You weep for what you know A red-haired child         |
| Oh, nothing ! not even grief ! Your quick-breathed hearts,                            | Sick in a fever, if you touch him once                |
| So sympathetic to the personal pang, Close on each separate knife-stroke, yielding up | Though but so little as with a fingertip,             |
| A whole life at each wound, incapable Of deepening, widening a large lap of life      | Will set you weeping, but a million sick              |
| To hold the world-full woe The human race                                             | You could as soon weep for the rule of three,         |
| To you means, such a child, or such a man,                                            | Or compound fractions Therefore, this same world      |
| You saw one morning waiting in the cold,                                              | Uncomprehended by you, must remain                    |
|                                                                                       | Uninfluenced by you—Women as you are,                 |

Merewomen, personal and passionate,  
You give us doting mothers, and  
chaste wives,  
Sublime Madonnas, and enduring  
saints !

We get no Christ from you,—and  
verily

We shall not get a poet, in my mind "

" With which conclusion you con-  
clude "

" But this—  
That you, Aurora, with the large live  
brow

And steady eyelids, cannot conde-  
scend

To play at art, as children play at  
swords,

To show a pretty spirit, chiefly ad-  
mired

Because true action is impossible  
You never can be satisfied with  
praise

Which men give women when they  
judge a book

Not as mere work, but as mere  
woman's work,

Expressing the comparative respect  
Which means the absolute scorn  
' Oh, excellent !

What grace ! what facile turns ! what  
fluent sweeps !

What delicate discernment  
almost thought !

The book does honour to the sex, we  
hold

Among our female authors we make  
room

For this fair writer, and congratu-  
late

The country that produces in these  
times

Such women, competent to  
spell "

" Stop there ! "  
I answered—burning through his  
thread of talk

With a quick flame of emotion,—  
" You have read

My soul if not my book, and argue  
well

I would not condescend . we will  
not say

To such a kind of praise (a worthless  
end

Is praise of all kinds), but to such a use

Of holy art and golden life I am  
young,  
And peradventure weak—you tell me  
so—

Through being a woman And, for  
all the rest,

Take thanks for justice I would  
rather dance

At fairs on tight-rope, till the babies  
dropped

Their gingerbread for joy,—than  
shift the types

For tolerable verse, intolerable

To men who act and suffer Better  
far,

Pursue a frivolous trade by serious  
means,

Than a sublime art frivolously "

" You,  
Choose nobler work than either, O

moist eyes,  
And hurrying lips, and heaving heart !

We are young  
Aurora, you and I The world  
look round

The world, we've come to late is  
swollen hard

With perished generations and their  
sins

The civiliser's spade grinds horribly  
On dead men's bones, and cannot  
turn up soil

That's otherwise than fetid All suc-  
cess

Proves partial failure, all advance  
implies

What's left behind, all triumph,  
something crushed

At the chariot-wheels, all govern-  
ment, some wrong

And rich men make the poor, who  
curse the rich,

Who agonise together, rich and poor,  
Under and over, in the social spasm

And crisis of the ages Here's an  
age,

That makes its own vocation ! here,  
we have stepped

Across the bounds of time ! here's  
nought to see,

But just the rich man and just  
Lazarus,

And both in torments, with a medi-  
ate gulf

Though not a hint of Abraham's  
bosom Who,

Being man and human, can stand  
calmly by  
And view these things, and never  
tease his soul  
For some great cure? No physic for  
this grief,  
In all the earth and heavens too?"  
"You believe  
In God for your part?"—ay? that He  
Who makes  
Can make good things from ill things,  
best from worst,  
As men plant tulips upon dunghills  
when  
They wish them finest?"  
"True A death-heat is  
The same as life-heat, to be accurate,  
And in all nature is no death at all,  
As men account of death, as long as  
God  
Stands witnessing for life perpetually  
By being just God That's abstract  
truth, I know,  
Philosophy, or sympathy with God  
But I, I sympathise with man, not  
God,  
I think I was a man for chiefly this,  
And when I stand beside a dying bed,  
It's death to me Observe,—it had  
not much  
Consoled the race of mastodons to  
know  
Before they went to fossil, that anon  
Their place should quicken with the  
elephant,  
They were not elephants but masto-  
dons  
And I a man, as men are now, and  
not  
As men may be hereafter, feel with  
men  
In the agonising present"  
"Is it so,"  
I said "my cousin? is the world so  
bad  
While I hear nothing of it through  
the trees?  
The world was always evil,—but so  
bad?"  
"So bad, Aurora Dear, my soul is  
grey  
With poring over the long sum of ill,  
So much for vice so much for dis-  
content,  
So much for the necessities of power,

So much for the connivances of fear,—  
Coherent in statistical despairs  
With such a total of distracted life,  
To see it down in figures on a page,  
Plain, silent, clear as God sees  
through the earth  
The sense of all the graves!  
that's terrible  
For one who is not God, and cannot  
right  
The wrong he looks on May I choose  
indeed  
But vow away my years, my means,  
my aims  
Among the helpers, if there's any  
help  
In such a social strait? The com-  
mon blood  
That swings along my veins, is strong  
enough  
To draw me to this duty"  
Then I spoke  
"I have not stood long on the strand  
of life,  
And these salt waters have had  
scarcely time  
To creep so high up as to wet my feet,  
I cannot judge these tides—I shall,  
perhaps  
A woman's always younger than a  
man  
At equal years, because she is dis-  
allowed  
Maturing by the outdoor sun and air,  
And kept in long-clothes past the age  
to walk  
Ah well, I know you men judge other-  
wise!  
You think a woman ripens as a  
peach,—  
In the cheeks, chiefly Pass it to me  
now,  
I'm young in age, and younger still, I  
think,  
As a woman But a child may say  
amen  
To a bishop's prayer and see the way  
it goes,  
And I, incapable to loose the knot  
Of social questions, can approve,  
applaud  
August compassion, Christian thoughts  
that shoot  
Beyond the vulgar white of personal  
aims  
Accept my reverence"

There he glowed on me  
 With all his face and eyes "No  
 other help?"  
 Said he—"no more than so?"  
 "What help?" I asked  
 "You'd scorn my help,—as Nature's  
 self, you say,  
 Has scorned to put her music in my  
 mouth,  
 Because a woman's Do you now  
 turn round  
 And ask for what a woman cannot  
 give?"  
 "For what she only can, I turn and  
 ask"  
 He answered, catching up my hands  
 in his,  
 And dropping on me from his high-  
 eaved brow  
 The full weight of his soul,—“I ask  
 for love  
 And that, she can, for life in fellow-  
 ship  
 Through bitter duties—that, I know  
 she can,  
 For wifehood will she?"  
 "Now" I said, "may God  
 Be witness 'twixt us two!" and with  
 the word,  
 Meseemed I floated into a sudden  
 light  
 Above his stature,—“am I proved  
 too weak  
 To stand alone, yet strong enough  
 to bear  
 Such leaners on my shoulder? poor to  
 think  
 Yet rich enough to sympathise with  
 thought?  
 Incompetent to sing, as blackbirds  
 can,  
 Yet competent to love, like HIM?"  
 I paused  
 Perhaps I darkened, as the light-  
 house will  
 That turns upon the sea "It's al-  
 ways so!"  
 Anything does for a wife"  
 "Aurora, dear,  
 And dearly honoured" he  
 pressed in at once  
 With eager utterance,—“you trans-  
 late me ill  
 I do not contradict my thought of  
 you

Which is most reverent, with another  
 thought  
 Found less so If your sex is weak  
 for art,  
 (And I who said so, did but honour  
 you  
 By using truth in courtship) it is  
 strong  
 For life and duty Place your fecund  
 heart  
 In mine, and let us blossom for the  
 world  
 That wants love's colour in the grey  
 of time  
 With all my talk I can but set you  
 where  
 You look down coldly on the arena-  
 heaps  
 Of headless bodies, shapeless, indis-  
 tinct!  
 The Judgment-Angels scarce would find  
 his way  
 Through such a heap of generalised  
 distress,  
 To the individual man with lips and  
 eyes—  
 Much less Aurora Ah, my sweet,  
 come down,  
 And, hand in hand, we'll go where  
 yours shall touch  
 These victims, one by one! till, one  
 by one,  
 The formless nameless trunk of every  
 man  
 Shall seem to wear a head, with hair  
 you know,  
 And every woman catch your mother's  
 face  
 To melt you into passion"  
 "I am a girl,"  
 I answered slowly, "you do well to  
 name  
 My mother's face Though far too  
 early, alas,  
 God's hand did interpose 'twixt it  
 and me,  
 I know so much of love, as used to  
 shine  
 In that face and another Just so  
 much,  
 No more indeed at all I have not  
 seen  
 So much love since, I pray you pardon  
 me  
 As answers even to make a marriage  
 with,



In this cold land of England What  
 you love  
 Is not a woman, Romney, but a cause  
 You want a helpmate, not a mistress,  
 sir,—  
 A wife to help your ends in her  
 no end !  
 Your cause is noble, your ends excel-  
 lent  
 But I, being most unworthy of these  
 and that,  
 Do otherwise conceive of love Fare-  
 well "

" Farewell, Aurora ? you reject me  
 thus ? "

He said  
 " Sir, you were married long ago  
 You have a wife already whom you  
 love  
 Your social theory Bless you both,  
 I say  
 For my part, I am scarcely meek  
 enough  
 To be the handmaid of a lawful  
 spouse  
 Do I look a Hagar, thank you ? "

" So, you jest ! "

" Nay so, I speak in earnest," I  
 replied  
 " You treat of marriage too much  
 like, at least,  
 A chief apostle, you would bear  
 with you  
 A wife a sister shall we  
 speak it out ?  
 A sister of charity "

" Then, must it be  
 Indeed farewell ? And was I so far  
 wrong  
 In hope and in illusion, when I took  
 The woman to be nobler than the man,  
 Yourself the noblest woman,—in the  
 use  
 And comprehension of what love is,—  
 love, ~  
 That generates the likeness of itself  
 Through all heroic duties ? so far  
 wrong,  
 In saying bluntly, venturing truth  
 on love,  
 ' Come, human creature, love and  
 work with me,'—  
 Instead of, ' Lady, thou art wondrous  
 fair,

And, where the Graces walk before,  
 the Muse  
 Will follow at the lighting of their  
 eyes,  
 And where the Muse walks, lovers  
 need to creep  
 Turn round and love me, or I die of  
 love "

With quiet indignation I broke in  
 " You misconceive the question like a  
 man,  
 Who sees a woman as the complement  
 Of his sex merely You forget too  
 much  
 That every creature, female as the  
 male,  
 Stands single in responsible act and  
 thought,  
 As also in birth and death Who-  
 ever says  
 To a loyal woman, ' Love and work  
 with me,'  
 Will get fair answers if the work and  
 love,  
 Being good themselves, are good for  
 her—the best  
 She was born for Women of a  
 softer mood,  
 Surprised by men when scarcely  
 awake to life,  
 Will sometimes only hear the first  
 word, love  
 And catch up with it any kind of work,  
 Indifferent, so that dear love go with  
 it  
 I do not blame such women, though,  
 for love,  
 They pick much oakum, earth's  
 fanatics make  
 Too frequently heaven's saints But  
 me, your work  
 Is not the best for,—nor your love  
 the best,  
 Nor able to commend the kind of  
 work  
 For love's sake merely Ah, you  
 force me sir,  
 To be over-bold in speaking of my-  
 self,—  
 I, too have my vocation,—work to  
 do,  
 The heavens and earth have set me,  
 since I changed  
 My father's face for theirs,—and,  
 though your world

Were twice as wretched as you represent,  
 Most serious work, most necessary work  
 As any of the economists' Reform,  
 Make trade a Christian possibility,  
 And individual right no general wrong,  
 Wipe out earth's furrows of the Thine and Mine,  
 And leave one green, for men to play at bowls,  
 With innings for them all ! what then, indeed,  
 If mortals were not greater by the head  
 Than any of their prosperities ? what then,  
 Unless the artist keep up open roads  
 Betwixt the seen and unseen,—bursting through  
 The best of your conventions with his best,  
 The speakable, imaginable best  
 God bids him speak, to prove what lies beyond  
 Both speech and imagination ? A starved man  
 Exceeds a fat beast we'll not barter, sir,  
 The beautiful for barley —And, even so,  
 I hold you will not compass your poor ends  
 Of barley-feeding and maternal ease,  
 Without a poet's individualism  
 To work your universal It takes a soul,  
 To move a body it takes a high-souled man,  
 To move the masses even to a cleaner sty  
 It takes the ideal, to blow a hair's-breadth off  
 The dust of the actual —Ah, your Founers failed,  
 Because not poets enough to understand  
 That life develops from within — For me,  
 Perhaps I am not worthy, as you say,  
 Of work like this ! perhaps a woman's soul  
 Aspires and not creates ! yet we aspire,

And yet I'll try out your perhapes, sir,  
 And if I fail why, burn me up my straw  
 Like other false works—I'll not ask for grace,  
 Your scorn is better, cousin Romney I  
 Who love my art, would never wish it lower  
 To suit my stature I may love my art  
 You'll grant that even a woman may love art,  
 Seeing that to waste true love on anything,  
 Is womanly, past question " I retain  
 The very last word which I said, that day,  
 As you the creaking of the door, years past,  
 Which let upon you such disabling news  
 You ever after have been graver  
 He,  
 His eyes the motions in his silent mouth,  
 Were fiery points on which my words were caught,  
 Transfixed for ever in my memory  
 For his sake, not their own And yet I know  
 I did not love him nor he me that's sure  
 And what I said, is unrepented of,  
 As truth is always Yet a princely man !—  
 If hard to me, heroic for himself !  
 He bears down on me through the slanting years,  
 The stronger for the distance If he had loved,  
 Ay, loved me, with that retributive face,  
 I might have been a common woman now,  
 And happier, less known and less left alone,  
 Perhaps a better woman after all,—  
 With chubby children hanging on my neck  
 To keep me low and wise Ah me, the vines  
 That bear such fruit, are proud to stoop with it

The palm stands upright in a realm of sand.

And I, who spoke the truth then,  
stand upright,  
Still worthy of having spoken out the truth,  
By being content I spoke it, though it set

Him there, me here —O woman's vile remorse,

To hanker after a mere name, a show,  
A supposition, a potential love !

Does every man who names love in our lives,

Become a power for that ? is love's true thing

So much best to us, that what personates love

Is next best ? A potential love, forsooth !

We are not so vile No, no—he cleaves, I think,

This man, this image, chiefly for the wrong

And shock he gave my life, in finding me

Precisely where the devil of my youth  
Had set me, on those mountain-peaks of hope

All glittering with the dawn-dew, all erect

And famished for the morning —saying while

I looked for empire and much tribute,  
“ Come,

I have some worthy work for thee below

Come, sweep my barns, and keep my hospitals,—

And I will pay thee with a current coin

Which men give women ”

As we spoke, the grass  
Was trod in haste beside us, and my aunt,

With smile distorted by the sun,—  
face, voice,

As much at issue with the summer-day

As if you brought a candle out of doors,—

Broke in with, “ Romney, here !—  
My child entreat

Your cousin to the house, and have your talk,

If girls must talk upon their birth-days Come ”

He answered for me calmly, with pale lips

That seemed to motion for a smile in vain

“ The talk is ended, madam, where we stand

Your brother's daughter has dismissed me here ,

And all my answer can be better said  
Beneath the trees, than wrong by such a word

Your house's hospitalities Farewell ”

With that he vanished I could hear his heel

Ring bluntly in the lane as down he leapt

The short way from us —Then, a measured speech

Withdrew me “ What means this, Aurora Leigh ?

My brother's daughter has dismissed my guests ? ”

The lion in me felt the keeper's voice,  
Through all its quivering dewlaps I was quelled

Before her,—meekened to the child she knew

I prayed her pardon, said, “ I had little thought

To give dismissal to a guest of hers,  
In letting go a friend of mine, who came

To take me into service as a wife,—  
No more than that, indeed ”

“ No more, no more ?  
Pray Heaven,” she answered, “ that

I was not mad

I could not mean to tell her to her face  
That Romney Leigh had asked me for a wife,

And I refused him ? ”

“ Did he ask ? ” I said ,  
“ I think he rather stooped to take me up

For certain uses which he found to do  
For something called a wife He never asked ”

“ What stuff ! ” she answered , “ are they queens, these girls ?

They must have mantles, stitched with twenty silks,

Spread out upon the ground, before  
 they'll step  
 One footstep for the noblest lover  
 born "  
 " But I am born," I said with firm-  
 ness " I  
 To walk another way than his, dear  
 aunt "  
 " You walk, you walk ! A babe at  
 thirteen months  
 Will walk as well as you " she cried in  
 haste,  
 " Without a steady finger Why,  
 you child,  
 God help you, you are groping in the  
 dark,  
 For all this sunlight You suppose,  
 perhaps,  
 That you, sole offspring of an opulent  
 man,  
 Are rich and free to choose a way to  
 walk ?  
 You think, and it's a reasonable  
 thought,  
 That I besides, being well to do in life,  
 Will leave my handful in my niece's  
 hand  
 When death shall paralyse these fin-  
 gers ? Pray,  
 Pray, child—albeit I know you love  
 me not,—  
 As if you loved me, that I may not  
 die !  
 For when I die and leave you, out you  
 go  
 (Unless I make room for you in my  
 grave),  
 Unhoused, unfed, my dear, poor  
 brother's lamb,  
 (Ah heaven,—that pains !)—without  
 a right to crop  
 A single blade of grass beneath these  
 trees,  
 Or cast a lamb's small shadow on the  
 lawn,  
 Unfed, unfolded ! Ah, my brother,  
 here's  
 The fruit you planted in your foreign  
 loves !—  
 Ay, there's the fruit he planted !  
 never look  
 Astonished at me with your mother's  
 eyes,  
 For it was they, who set you where  
 you are,

An undowered orphan Child, your  
 father's choice  
 Of that said mother, disinherited  
 His daughter, his and hers Men do  
 not think  
 Of sons and daughters, when they fall  
 in love,  
 So much more than of sisters, other-  
 wise,  
 He would have paused to ponder  
 what he did,  
 And shrunk before that clause in the  
 entail  
 Excluding offspring by a foreign wife  
 (The clause set up a hundred years  
 ago  
 By a Leigh who wedded a French  
 dancing-girl  
 And had his heart danced over in re-  
 turn),  
 But this man shrunk at nothing,  
 never thought  
 Of you, Aurora, any more than me—  
 Your mother must have been a pretty  
 thing,  
 For all the coarse Italian blacks and  
 browns,  
 To make a good man, which my  
 brother was  
 Uncharly of the duties to his house,  
 But so it fell indeed Our Cousin  
 Vane,  
 Vane Leigh, the father of this Rom-  
 ney, wrote  
 Directly on your birth, to Italy,  
 ' I ask your baby daughter for my  
 son  
 In whom the entail now merges by the  
 law  
 Betroth her to us out of love, instead  
 Of colder reasons, and she shall not  
 lose  
 By love or law from henceforth '—so  
 he wrote,  
 A generous cousin was my cousin  
 Vane  
 Remember how he drew you to his  
 knee  
 The year you came here, just before  
 he died,  
 And hollowed out his hands to hold  
 your cheeks,  
 And wished them redder,—you re-  
 member Vane ?  
 And now his son who represents our  
 house



The sudden blush devours them, neck  
 and brow,  
 They have drawn too near the fire of  
 life, like gnats,  
 And flare up bodily, wings and all  
 What then?  
 Who's sorry for a gnat or girl?  
 I blushed  
 I feel the brand upon my forehead  
 now  
 Strike hot, sear deep, as guiltless men  
 may feel  
 The felon's iron, say, and scorn the  
 mark  
 Of what they are not Most illogical  
 Irrational nature of our womanhood,  
 That blushes one way, feels another  
 way,  
 And prays, perhaps, another! After  
 all,  
 We cannot be the equal of the male,  
 Who rules his blood a little  
 For although  
 I blushed indeed, as if I loved the  
 man,  
 And her incisive smile, accrediting  
 That treason of false witness in my  
 blush,  
 Did bow me downward like a swathe  
 of grass  
 Below its level that struck me,—I  
 attest  
 The conscious skies and all their daily  
 suns,  
 I think I loved him not nor  
 then, nor since  
 Nor ever Do we love the school-  
 master  
 Being busy in the woods? much less,  
 being poor,  
 The overseer of the parish? Do we  
 keep  
 Our love, to pay our debts with?  
 White and cold  
 I grew next moment As my blood  
 recoiled  
 From that imputed ignominy I made  
 My heart great with it Then, at  
 last, I spoke,—  
 Spoke ventable words, but passionate,  
 Too passionate perhaps ground  
 up with sobs  
 To shapeless endings She let fall  
 my hands,  
 And took her smile off, in sedate dis-  
 gust,

As peradventure she had touched a  
 snake—  
 A dead snake, mind!—and, turning  
 round, replied,  
 "We'll leave Italian manners, if you  
 please  
 I think you had an English father,  
 child,  
 And ought to find it possible to speak  
 A quiet 'Yes' or 'No' like English  
 girls,  
 Without convulsions In another  
 month  
 We'll take another answer no,  
 or yes"  
 With that, she left me in the garden-  
 walk  
 I had a father! yes, but long ago—  
 How long it seemed that moment  
 Oh how far  
 How far and safe God, dost Thou  
 keep Thy saints  
 When once gone from us! We may  
 call against  
 The lighted windows of thy fair June-  
 heaven  
 Where all the souls are happy,—and  
 not one,  
 Not even my father, look from work  
 or play  
 To ask, "Who is it that cries after us,  
 Below there, in the dusk?" Yet  
 formerly  
 He turned his face upon me quick  
 enough  
 If I said "Father" Now I might  
 cry loud,  
 The little lark reached higher with his  
 song  
 Than I with crying Oh, alone alone,—  
 Not troubling any in heaven, nor any  
 on earth,  
 I stood there in the garden, and  
 looked up  
 The deaf blue sky that brings the  
 roses out  
 On such June mornings  
 You who keep account  
 Of crisis and transition in this life,  
 Set down the first time Nature says  
 plain "No"  
 To some "Yes" in you, and walks  
 over you  
 In gorgeous sweeps of scorn We all  
 begin

By singing with the birds, and run-  
 ning fast  
 With June-days hand in hand but  
 once, for all,  
 The birds must sing against us, and  
 the sun  
 Strike down upon us like a friend's  
 sword caught  
 By an enemy to slay us, while we  
 read  
 The dear name on the blade which  
 bites at us !—  
 That's bitter and convincing after  
 that  
 We seldom doubt that something in  
 the large  
 Smooth order of creation, though no  
 more  
 Than haply a man's footstep, has  
 gone wrong,  
  
 Some tears fell down my cheeks, and  
 then I smiled,  
 As those smile who have no face in the  
 world  
 To smile back to them I had lost a  
 friend  
 In Romney Leigh, the thing was sure  
 —a friend,  
 Who had looked at me most gently  
 now and then  
 And spoken of my favourite books  
 "our books"  
 With such a voice ! Well, voice and  
 look were now  
 More utterly shut out from me I felt,  
 Than even my father's Romney  
 now was turned  
 To a benefactor to a generous man,  
 Who had tied himself to marry  
 me, instead  
 Of such a woman, with low timorous  
 lids  
 He lifted with a sudden word one day,  
 And left, perhaps, for my sake —Ah,  
 self-tied  
 By a contract,—male Iphigenia,  
 bound  
 At a fatal Aulis, for the winds to  
 change  
 (But loose him—they'll not change),  
 he well might seem  
 A little cold and dominant in love !  
 He had a right to be dogmatical,  
 Thus poor, good Romney Love, to  
 him, was made

A simple law-clause If I married  
 him,  
 I would not dare to call my soul my  
 own  
 Which so he had bought and paid for  
 every thought  
 And every heart-beat down there in  
 the bill,—  
 Not one found honestly deductible  
 From any use that pleased him ! He  
 might cut  
 My body into coins to give away  
 Among his other paupers, change  
 my sons,  
 While I stood dumb as Griseld, for  
 black babes  
 Or piteous foundlings, might un-  
 questioned set  
 My right hand teaching in the Ragged  
 Schools,  
 My left hand washing in the Public  
 Baths,  
 What time my angel of the Ideal  
 stretched  
 Both his to me in vain ! I could not  
 claim  
 The poor right of a mouse in a trap, to  
 squeal,  
 And take so much as pity, from my-  
 self  
  
 Farewell, good Romney ! if I loved  
 you even,  
 I could but ill afford to let you  
 be  
 So generous to me Farewell, friend,  
 since friend  
 Betwixt us two, forsooth, must be a  
 word  
 So heavily overladen And, since  
 help  
 Must come to me from those who love  
 me not  
 Farewell, all helpers—I must help  
 myself,  
 And am alone from henceforth —Then  
 I stooped,  
 And lifted the soiled garland from  
 the ground,  
 And set it on my head as bitterly  
 As when the Spanish king did crown  
 the bones  
 Of his dead love So be it I pre-  
 serve  
 That crown still,—in the drawer  
 there ! 'twas the first,

The rest are like it,—those Olympian  
     crowns,  
 We run for, till we lose sight of the  
     sun  
 In the dust of the racing chariots !  
     After that,  
 Before the evening fell, I had a note  
 Which ran,—“ Aurora, sweet Chal-  
     dean, you read  
 My meaning backward like your  
     Eastern books,  
 While I am from the West, dear Read  
     me now  
 A little plainer Did you hate me  
     quite  
 But yesterday ? I loved you for my  
     part,  
 I love you If I spoke untenderly  
 This morning, my beloved, pardon  
     it,  
 And comprehend me that I loved you  
     so,  
 I set you on the level of my soul,  
 And overwashed you with the bitter  
     brine  
 Of some habitual thoughts Hence-  
     forth, my flower,  
 Be planted out of reach of any such  
 And lean the side you please, with all  
     your leaves !  
 Write woman's verses and dream  
     woman's dreams,  
 But let me feel your perfume in my  
     home  
 To make my Sabbath after working-  
     days,  
 Bloom out your youth beside me,—  
     be my wife ”  
  
 I wrote in answer—“ We, Chaldeans,  
     discern  
 Still farther than we read I know  
     your heart,  
 And shut it like the holy book it is  
 Reserved for mild-eyed saints to pore  
     upon  
 Betwixt their prayers at vespers  
     Well, you're right,  
 I did not surely hate you yesterday,  
 And yet I do not love you enough to-  
     day  
 To wed you, cousin Romney Take  
     this word,  
 And let it stop you as a generous man  
 From speaking farther You may  
     tease, indeed,

And blow about my feelings or my  
     leaves,—  
 And here's my aunt will help you with  
     east winds,  
 And break a stalk, perhaps, torment-  
     ing me,  
 But certain flowers grow near as deep  
     as trees,  
 And, cousin, you'll not move my root,  
     not you,  
 With all your confluent storms Then  
     let me grow  
 Within my wayside hedge, and pass  
     your way !  
 This flower has never as much to say  
     to you  
 As the antique tomb which said to  
     travellers, ‘ Pause,’  
 ‘ Siste, viator ’ ” Ending thus, I  
     signed  
  
 The next week passed in silence, so  
     the next,  
 And several after Romney did not  
     come,  
 Nor my aunt chide me I lived on  
     and on  
 As if my heart were kept beneath a  
     glass,  
 And everybody stood, all eyes and  
     ears,  
 To see and hear it tick I could not  
     sit  
 Nor walk, nor take a book, nor lay it  
     down,  
 Nor sew on steadily, nor drop a  
     stitch  
 And a sigh with it, but I felt her looks  
 Still cleaving to me, like the sucking  
     asp  
 To Cleopatra's breast, persistently  
 Through the intermittent pantings  
     Being observed,  
 When observation is not sympathy  
 Is just being tortured If she said a  
     word,  
 A “ Thank you,” or an “ If it please  
     you, dear,”  
 She meant a commination, or, at best,  
 An exorcism against the devildom  
 Which plainly held me So with all  
     the house  
 Susannah could not stand and twist  
     my hair,  
 Without such glancing at the looking-  
     glass



To see my face there, that she missed  
 the plait  
 And John,—I never sent my plate for  
 soup,  
 Or did not send it, but the foolish  
 John  
 Resolved the problem, 'twixt his nap-  
 kined thumbs,  
 Of what was signified by taking soup  
 Or choosing mackerel Neighbours,  
 who dropped in  
 On morning visits, feeling a joint  
 wrong,  
 Smiled admonition, sate uneasily,  
 And talked with measured, empha-  
 sised reserve  
 Of parish news, like doctors to the  
 sick,  
 When not called in,—as if, with leave  
 to speak,  
 They might say something Nay, the  
 very dog  
 Would watch me from his sun-patch  
 on the floor  
 In alternation with the large black fly  
 Not yet in reach of snapping So I  
 lived  
 A Roman died so, smeared with  
 honey, teased  
 By insects stared to torture by the  
 noon  
 And many patient souls 'neath Eng-  
 lish roofs  
 Have died like Romans I in look-  
 ing back,  
 Wish only, now, I had borne the  
 plague of all  
 With meeker spirits than were rife in  
 Rome  
 For, on the sixth week, the dead sea  
 broke up  
 Dashed suddenly through beneath the  
 heel of Him  
 Who stands upon the sea and earth,  
 and swears  
 Time shall be nevermore The clock  
 struck nine  
 That morning, too,—no lark was out  
 of tune,  
 The hidden farms among the hills,  
 breathed straight  
 Their smoke toward heaven, the lime-  
 tree scarcely stirred  
 Beneath the blue weight of the cloud-  
 less sky,

Though still the July air came float-  
 ing through  
 The woodbine at my window, in and  
 out,  
 With touches of the out-door country  
 news  
 For a bending forehead There I  
 sate, and wished  
 That morning-truce of God would last  
 till eve,  
 Or longer "Sleep," I thought, "late  
 sleepers,—sleep,  
 And spare me yet, the burden of your  
 eyes"  
 Then, suddenly, a single ghastly  
 shriek  
 Tore upwards from the bottom of the  
 house  
 Like one who wakens in a grave and  
 shrieks,  
 The still house seemed to shriek itself  
 alive,  
 And shudder through its passages  
 and stairs  
 With slam of doors and clash of bells  
 —I sprang,  
 I stood up in the middle of the room,  
 And there confronted at my chamber-  
 door,  
 A white face,—shivering, ineffectual  
 lips  
 "Come, come," they tried to utter,  
 and I went,  
 As if a ghost had drawn me at the  
 point  
 Of a fiery finger through the uneven  
 dark,  
 I went with reeling footsteps down  
 the stair,  
 Nor asked a question  
 There she sate, my aunt,—  
 Bolt upright in the chair beside her  
 bed,  
 Whose pillow had no dint! she had  
 used no bed  
 For that night's sleeping yet  
 slept well My God,  
 The dumb dension of that grey,  
 peaked face  
 Concluded something grave against  
 the sun,  
 Which filled the chamber with its  
 July burst  
 When Susan drew the curtains, ignor-  
 ant

Of who sate open-eyed behind her  
 There,  
 She sate it sate we said  
 "she" yesterday  
 And held a letter with unbroken seal,  
 As Susan gave it to her hand last  
 night  
 All night she had held it If its news  
 referred  
 To duchies or to dunghills, not an  
 inch  
 She'd budge, 'twas obvious, for such  
 worthless odds  
 Nor, though the stars were suns, and  
 overburned  
 Their spheric limitations swallowing  
 up  
 Like wax the azure spaces, could they  
 force  
 Those open eyes to wink once What  
 last sight  
 Had left them blank and flat so,—  
 drawing out  
 The faculty of vision from the roots,  
 As nothing more, worth seeing, re-  
 mained behind ?

Were those the eyes that watched me,  
 worried me ?  
 That dogged me up and down the  
 hours and days,  
 A beaten breathless, miserable soul ?  
 And did I pray, a half-hour back, but  
 so,  
 To escape the burden of those eyes  
 those eyes ?  
 "Sleep late" I said —  
 Why now indeed, they sleep  
 God answers sharp and sudden on  
 some prayers,  
 And thrusts the thing we have prayed  
 for in our face,  
 A gauntlet with a gift in't Every  
 wish  
 Is like a prayer with God  
 I had my wish,—  
 To read and meditate the thing I  
 would,  
 To fashion all my life upon my  
 thought,  
 And marry, or not marry Hence-  
 forth none  
 Could disapprove me, vex me, hamper  
 me  
 Full ground-room, in this desert  
 newly made,

For Babylon or Baalbec,—when the  
 breath,  
 Now choked with sand, returns, for  
 building towns !  
 The heir came over on the funeral  
 day,  
 And we two cousins met before the  
 dead,  
 With two pale faces Was it death or  
 life  
 That moved us ? When the will was  
 read and done,  
 The official guest and witnesses with-  
 drawn,  
 We rose up in a silence almost hard,  
 And looked at one another Then I  
 said,  
 "Farewell, my cousin"  
 But he touched just touched  
 My hatstrings tied for going (at the  
 door  
 The carnage stood to take me), and  
 said low,  
 Siste, viator"  
 "Is there time," I asked,  
 "In these last days of railroads, to  
 stop short  
 Like Cæsar's chariot (weighing half a  
 ton)  
 On the Appian road, for morals ?"  
 "There is time,"  
 He answered grave, "for necessary  
 words,  
 Inclusive trust me, of no epitaph  
 On man or act my cousin We have  
 read  
 A will, which gives you all the per-  
 sonal goods  
 And funded momies of your aunt"  
 "I thank  
 Her memory for it With three hun-  
 dred pounds  
 We buy in England even, clear stand-  
 ing-room  
 To stand and work in Only two  
 hours since,  
 I fancied I was poor"  
 "And, cousin, 'till  
 You're richer than you fancy The  
 will says,  
 Three hundred pounds, and any other  
 sum  
 Of which the said testatrix dies pos-  
 sessed  
 I say she died possessed of other  
 sums"

"Dear Romney, need we chronicle  
the pence?  
I'm richer than I thought—that's  
evident  
Enough so"

"Listen rather You've to do  
With business and a cousin," he re-  
sumed,

"And both, I fear, need patience  
Here's the fact

The other sum (there is another sum,  
Unspecified in any will which dates  
After possession, yet bequeathed as  
much

And clearly as those said three hun-  
dred pounds)

Is thirty thousand You will have it  
paid

When? where? My duty  
troubles you with words"

He struck the iron when the bar was  
hot,

No wonder if my eyes sent out some  
sparks

"Pause there! I thank you You  
are delicate

In glozing gifts,—but I, who share  
your blood,

And rather made for giving like  
yourself,

Than taking, like your pensioners  
Farewell"

He stopped me with a gesture of  
calm pride

"A Leigh," he said, "gives largesse  
and gives love,

But glozes nether if a Leigh could  
gloze,

He would not do it, moreover, to a  
Leigh,

With blood trained up along nine  
centuries

To found and hate a lie from eyes  
like yours

And now we'll make the rest as clear,  
your aunt

Possessed these monies"

"You will make it clear  
My cousin, as the honour of us both

Or one of us speaks vainly—that's  
not I

My aunt possessed this sum,—in-  
herited

From whom, and when? bring docu-  
ments, prove dates"

"Why now indeed you throw your  
bonnet off,

As if you had time left for a logarithm!  
The faith's the want Dear cousin,

give me faith,  
And you shall walk this road with  
silken shoes

As clean as any lady of our house  
Supposed the proudest Oh, I com-  
prehend

The whole position from your point  
of sight

I oust you from your father's halls  
and lands,

And make you poor by getting rich—  
that's law,

Considering which, in common cir-  
cumstance

You would not scruple to accept from  
me

Some compensation some sufficiency  
Of income—that were justice, but,  
alas

I love you that's mere nature!—  
you reject

My love that's nature also,—  
and at once,

You cannot, from a suitor disal-  
lowed

A hand thrown back as mine is, into  
yours

Receive a doit, a farthing not  
for the world!

That's etiquette with women, obvi-  
ously

Exceeding claim of nature, law, and  
right,

Unanswerable to all I grant, you  
see

The case as you conceive it,—leave  
you room

To sweep your ample skirts of  
womanhood,

While, standing humbly squeezed  
against the wall,

I own myself excluded from being  
just,

Restrained from paying indubitable  
debts

Because denied from giving you my  
soul—

That's my misfortune!—I submit  
to it

As if, in some more reasonable age,  
'Twould not be less inevitable

Enough

You'll trust me, cousin, as a gentleman

To keep your honour, as you count it, pure,—

Your scruples (just as if I thought them wise)

Safe and inviolate from gifts of mine "

I answered mild but earnest " I believe

In no one's honour which another keeps,

Nor man's nor woman's As I keep, myself

My truth and my religion I depute No father though I had one this side

death,

Nor brother, though I had twenty, much less you,

Though twice my cousin, and once Romney Leigh,

To keep my honour pure You face, to-day,

A man who wants instruction, mark me, not

A woman who wants protection As to a man

Show manhood, speak out plainly, be precise

With facts and dates My aunt inherited

This sum, you say—" " I said she died possessed

Of this, dear cousin " " Not by heritage

Thank you we're getting to the facts at last

Perhaps she played at commerce with a ship

Which came in heavy with Australian gold ?

Or touched a lottery with her finger-end,

Which tumbled on a sudden into her lap

Some old Rhine tower or principality ? Perhaps she had to do with a marine

Sub-transatlantic railroad, which pre- pays

As well as pre-supposes ? or perhaps Some stale ancestral debt was after-

paid By a hundred years, and took her by surprise ?—

You shake your head, my cousin, I guess ill "

" You need not guess, Aurora, nor decide,—

The truth is not afraid of hurting you. You'll find no cause, in all your

scruples, why

Your aunt should cavil at a deed of gift

'Twixt her and me "

" I thought so—ah ! a gift "

" You naturally thought so," he resumed

" A very natural gift "

" A gift, a gift ! Her individual life being stranded high

Above all want approaching opulence, Too haughty was she to accept a gift

Without some ultimate aim ah, ah, I see,—

A gift intended plainly for her heirs, And so accepted if accepted

ah, Indeed that might be, I am snared perhaps

Just so But, cousin, shall I pardon you,

If thus you have caught me with a cruel springle ? "

He answered gently, " Need you tremble and pant

Like a netted lioness ? is't my fault, mine,

That you're a grand wild creature of the woods,

And hate the stall built for you ? Any way,

Though triply netted need you glare at me ?

I do not hold the cords of such a net ; You're free from me, Aurora ! "

" Now may God Deliver me from this strait ! This gift of yours

Was tendered when ? accepted when ? " I asked

" A month a fortnight since ? Six weeks ago

It was not tendered By a word she dropped,

I know it was not tendered nor received

When was it ? Bring your dates "

" What matters when ? A half-hour ere she died or a half-year, Secured the gift, maintains the heritage

Inviolable with law As easy pluck  
 The golden stars from heaven's embroidered stole,  
 To pin them on the grey side of this earth,  
 As make you poor again, thank God "  
 "Not poor  
 Nor clean again from henceforth, you thank God ?  
 Well, sir—I ask you I insist at need,  
 Vouchsafe the special date, the special date "

"The day before her death-day," he replied,  
 "The gift was in her hands We'll find that deed,  
 And certify that date to you "

As one  
 Who has climbed a mountain-height and carried up  
 His own heart climbing, panting in his throat

With the toil of the ascent, takes breath at last,  
 Looks back in triumph—so I stood and looked

"Dear cousin Romney, we have reached the top  
 Of this steep question, and may rest, I think

But first—I pray you pardon, that the shock  
 And surge of natural feeling and event  
 Had made me oblivious of acquainting you

That thus, this letter unread, mark—still sealed,  
 Was found enfolded in the poor dead hand

That spirit of hers had gone beyond the address,  
 Which could not find her though you wrote it clear—

I know your writing, Romney,—recognise

The open-hearted A, the liberal sweep  
 Of the G Now listen,—let us understand,

You will not find that famous deed of gift,

Unless you find it in the letter here,  
 Which, not being mine, I give you back—Refuse

To take the letter? well then—you and I,

As writer and as heiress, open it  
 Together, by your leave—Exactly so  
 The words in which the noble offering's made,

Are nobler still, my cousin, and, I own,

The proudest and most delicate heart alive,

Distracted from the measure of the gift

By such a grace in giving, might accept

Your largesse without thinking any more

Of the burthen of it, than King Solomon

Considered, when he wore his holy ring  
 Charactered over with the ineffable spell,

How many carats of fine gold made up  
 Its money-value So, Leigh gives to Leigh—

Or rather, might have given, observe !  
 —for that's

The point we come to Here's a proof of gift

But here's no proof, sir, of acceptance,  
 But rather, disproof Death's black dust, being blown

Infiltrated through every secret fold  
 Of this sealed letter by a puff of fate,

Dried up for ever the fresh-written ink,  
 Annulled the gift, disutilised the grace,  
 And left these fragments "

As I spoke, I tore

The paper up and down, and down and up

And crosswise, till it fluttered from my hands

As forest-leaves, stripped suddenly and rapt

By a whirlwind on Valdarno, drop again,

Drop slow, and strew the melancholy ground

Before the amazed hills why, so, indeed,

I'm writing like a poet, somewhat large

In the type of the image,—and exaggerate

A small thing with a great thing, topping it !—

But then I'm thinking how his eyes  
 looked his,  
 With what despondent and surprised  
 reproach !  
 I think the tears were in them, as he  
 looked—  
 I think the manly mouth just trem-  
 bled Then  
 He broke the silence  
 " I may ask, perhaps  
 Although no stranger only  
 Romney Leigh,  
 Which means still less than  
 Vincent Carrington  
 Your plans in going hence, and where  
 you go  
 This cannot be a secret"  
 "All my life  
 Is open to you, cousin I go hence  
 To London, to the gathering-place of  
 souls,  
 To live mine straight out, vocally, in  
 books,  
 Harmoniously for others, if indeed  
 A woman's soul, like man's, be wide  
 enough  
 To carry the whole octave (that's to  
 prove)  
 Or, if I fail, still, purely for myself  
 Pray God be with me, Romney"  
 "Ah, poor child,  
 Who fight against the mother's 'turning  
 hand,  
 And choose the headsman's! May  
 God change His world  
 For your sake, sweet, and make it  
 mild as heaven,  
 And juster than I have found you!"  
 But I paused  
 "And you my cousin?"  
 "I," he said,—"you ask?  
 You care to ask? Well, girls have  
 curious minds,  
 And fain would know the end of  
 everything  
 Of cousins, therefore, with the rest  
 For me,  
 Aurora, I've my work, you know my  
 work,  
 And, having missed this year some  
 personal hope  
 I must beware the rather that I miss  
 No reasonable duty While you  
 sing  
 Your happy pastorals of the meads  
 and trees,

Bethink you that I go to impress and  
 prove  
 On stifled brains and deafened ears,  
 stunned deaf  
 Crushed dull with grief, that nature  
 sings itself,  
 And needs no mediate poet, lute or  
 voice,  
 To make it vocal While you ask of  
 men  
 Your audience I may get their leave  
 perhaps  
 For hungry orphans to say audibly  
 'We're hungry see,'—for beaten and  
 bullied wives  
 To hold their unweaned babies up in  
 sight,  
 Whom orphanage would better, and  
 for all  
 To speak and claim their portion  
 by no means  
 Of the soil, but of the sweat in  
 tilling it—  
 Since this is now-a-days turned  
 privilege,  
 To have only God's curse on us, and  
 not man's  
 Such work I have for doing, elbow-  
 deep  
 In social problems,—as you tie your  
 rhymes,  
 To draw my uses to cohere with  
 needs,  
 And bring the uneven world back to  
 its round,  
 Or failing so much, fill up, bridge at  
 least  
 To smother issues, some abysmal  
 cracks  
 And feuds of earth, intestine heats  
 have made  
 To keep men separate,—using sorry  
 shifts  
 Of hospitals, almshouses, infant  
 schools,  
 And other practical stuff of partial  
 good,  
 You lovers of the beautiful and whole  
 Despise by system"  
 "I despise? The scorn  
 Is yours, my cousin Poets become  
 such,  
 Through scorning nothing You de-  
 cry them for  
 The good of beauty, sung and taught  
 by them,

While they respect your practical  
partial good  
As being a part of beauty's self  
Adieu !  
When God helps all the workers for  
His world,  
The singers shall have help of Him,  
not last "

He smiled as men smile when they will  
not speak  
Because of something bitter in the  
thought ,  
And still I feel his melancholy eyes  
Look judgment on me It is seven  
years since  
I know not if 'twas pity or 'twas scorn  
Has made them so far-reaching  
judge it ye  
Who have had to do with pity more  
than love,  
And scorn than hatred I am used,  
since then,  
To other ways, from equal men But  
so,  
Even so, we let go hands, my cousin  
and I,  
And, in between us, rushed the torrent-  
world  
To blanch our faces like divided rocks,  
And bar for ever mutual sight and  
touch  
Except through swirl of spray and all  
that roar

### THIRD BOOK

" To-day thou girdest up thy loins  
thyself  
And goest where thou wouldest pre-  
sently  
Others shall gird thee," said the Lord,  
" to go  
Where thou would'st not " He spoke  
to Peter thus,  
To signify the death which he should  
die  
When crucified head downwards  
If He spoke  
To Peter then, He speaks to us the  
same,  
The word suits many different martyr-  
doms,  
And signifies a multiform of death,  
Although we scarcely die apos'tles, we,  
And have mislaid the keys of heaven  
and earth

For 'tis not in mere death that men  
die most ,  
And, after our first girding of the loins  
In youth's fine linen and fair broderie,  
To run up hill and meet the rising sun,  
We are apt to sit tired, patient as a  
fool,  
While others gird us with the violent  
bands  
Of social figments, feints, and for-  
malisms.<sup>137</sup>  
Reversing our straight nature, lifting  
up  
Our base needs, keeping down our  
lofty thoughts,  
Head downward on the cross-sticks of  
the world

Yet He can pluck us from that shame-  
ful cross  
God set our feet low and our forehead  
high,  
And show us how a man was made to  
walk !

Leave the lamp, Susan, and go up to  
bed  
The room does very well , I have to  
write  
Beyond the stroke of midnight Get  
away ,  
Your steps, for ever buzzing in the  
room,  
Tease me like gnats Ah, letters !  
throw them down  
At once, as I must have them, to be  
sure,  
Whether I bid you never bring me  
such  
At such an hour, or bid you No  
excuse  
You choose to bring them, as I choose  
perhaps  
To throw them in the fire Now, get  
to bed,  
And dream, if possible I am not cross  
Why what a pettish, petty thing I  
grow,—  
A mere, mere woman,—a mere  
flaccid nerve,—  
A kerchief left out all night in the rain,  
Turned soft so,—overtasked and over-  
strained  
And overlived in this close London  
life !  
And yet I should be stronger

Never burn  
 Your letters, poor Aurora ! for they  
   stare  
 With red seals from the table, saying  
   each  
 " Here's something that you know  
   not " Out alas,  
 'Tis scarcely that the world's more  
   good and wise  
 Or even straighter and more conse-  
   quent  
 Since yesterday at this time—yet,  
   again,  
 If but one angel spoke from Ararat,  
 I should be very sorry not to hear  
 So open all the letters ! let me read  
 Blanche Ord, the writer in the " Lady's  
   Fan,"  
 Requests my judgment on       that,  
   afterwards  
 Kate Ward desires the model of my  
   cloak,  
 And signs, " Elsha to you " Pringle  
   Sharpe  
 Presents his work on " Social Con-  
   duct,"       craves  
 A little money for his pressing  
   debts  
 From me, who scarce have money for  
   my needs,—  
 Art's fiery chariot which we journey in  
 Being apt to singe our singing-ropes  
   to holes,  
 Although you ask me for my cloak,  
   Kate Ward !  
 Here's Rudgely knows it—editor and  
   scribe,—  
 He's forced to marry where his heart  
   is not,  
 Because the purse lacks where he lost  
   his heart  
 Ah,—lost it because no one picked it  
   up !  
 That's really loss ! (and passable im-  
   pudence )  
 My critic Hammond flatters prettily,  
 And wants another volume like the  
   last  
 My critic Belfair wants another book  
 Entirely different, which will sell (and  
   live ?),  
 A striking book, yet not a startling  
   book  
 The public blames originalities  
 (You must not pump spring-water  
   unawares

Upon a gracious public, full of  
   nerves—)  
 Good things, not subtle, new yet  
   orthodox,  
 As easy reading as the dog-eared page  
 That's fingered by said public, fifty  
   years,  
 Since first taught spelling by its grand-  
   mother,  
 And yet a revelation in some sort  
 That's hard, my critic Belfair ! So—  
   what next ?  
 My critic Stokes objects to abstract  
   thoughts,  
 " Call a man, John, a woman, Joan,"  
   says he,  
 " And do not prate so of humanities "   
 Whereat I call my critic simply  
   Stokes  
 My critic Jobson recommends more  
   mirth,  
 Because a cheerful genius suits the  
   times,  
 And all true poets laugh unquench-  
   ably  
 Like Shakspeare and the gods That's  
   very hard  
 The gods may laugh, and Shakspeare  
   Dante smiled  
 With such a needy heart on two pale  
   lips,  
 We cry " Weep rather, Dante "   
   Poems are  
 Men, if true poems   and who dares  
   exclaim  
 At any man's door, " Here, 'tis pro-  
   bable  
 The thunder fell last week and killed  
   a wife,  
 And scared a sickly husband—what  
   of that ?  
 Get up, be merry, shout, and clap your  
   hands,  
 Because a cheerful genius suits the  
   times—" ?  
 None says so to the man,—and why  
   indeed  
 Should any to the poem ? A ninth  
   seal  
 The apocalypse is drawing to a close  
 Ha,—thus from Vincent Carrington,—  
   " Dear friend,  
 I want good counsel   Will you lend  
   me wings  
 To raise me to the subject, in a  
   sketch



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| <p>I'll bring to-morrow—may I? at eleven?</p> <p>A poet's only born to turn to use,<br/>So save you! for the world and Carrington "</p> <p>" (Writ after) Have you heard of Romney Leigh,</p> <p>Beyond what's said of him in newspapers,<br/>His phalansteries there, his speeches here,<br/>His pamphlets, pleas, and statements, everywhere?</p> <p>He dropped <i>me</i> long ago, but no one drops<br/>A golden apple—though indeed, one day<br/>You hinted that, but jested Well, at least,<br/>You know Lord Howe who sees him whom he sees,<br/>And <i>you</i> see, and I hate to see,—for Howe</p> <p>Stands high upon the brink of theories,<br/>Observes the swimmers, and cries 'Very fine,'<br/>But keeps dry linen equally,—unlike<br/>That gallant breaster, Romney<br/>Strange it is<br/>Such sudden madness seizing a young man,<br/>To make earth over again,—while I'm content<br/>To make the pictures Let me bring the sketch<br/>A tiptoe Danae, overbold and hot,<br/>Both arms a-flame to meet her wishing Jove<br/>Halfway, and burn him faster down, the face<br/>And breasts upturned and straining, the loose locks<br/>All glowing with the anticipated gold<br/>Or here's another on the self-same theme<br/>She lies here—flat upon her prison-floor,<br/>The long hair swathed about her to the heel,<br/>Like wet sea-weed You dimly see her through<br/>The glittering haze of that prodigious rain,<br/>Half blotted out of nature by a love<br/>As heavy as fate I'll bring you either sketch</p> | <p>I think, myself, the second indicates<br/>More passion "</p> <p>Surely Self is put away,<br/>And calm with abdication She is Jove,<br/>And no more Danae—greater thus<br/>Perhaps<br/>The painter symbolises unawares<br/>Two states of the recipient artist-soul,<br/>One, forward, personal, wanting reverence,<br/>Because aspiring only We'll be calm,<br/>And know that, when indeed our Joves come down,<br/>We all turn stiller than we have ever been</p> <p>Kind Vincent Carrington I'll let him come<br/>He talks of Florence,—and may say a word<br/>Of something as it chanced seven years ago,—<br/>A hedgehog in the path, or a lame bird,<br/>In those green country walks in that good time,<br/>When certainly I was so miserable<br/>I seem to have missed a blessing ever since</p> <p>The music soars within the little lark,<br/>And the lark soars It is not thus with men<br/>We do not make our places with our strains —<br/>Content, while they rise, to remain behind,<br/>Alone on earth instead of so in heaven<br/>No matter—I bear on my broken tale</p> <p>When Romney Leigh and I had parted thus,<br/>I took a chamber up three flights of stairs<br/>Not far from being as steep as some larks climb,<br/>And, in a certain house in Kensington,<br/>Three years I lived and worked Get leave to work<br/>In this world,—'tis the best you get at all,<br/>For God, in cursing, gives us better gifts<br/>Than men in benediction God says,<br/>"Sweat</p> |
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For foreheads, "men say "crowns,"  
 and so we are crowned,—  
 Ay, gashed by some tormenting circle  
 of steel  
 Which snaps with a secret spring Get  
 work, get work,  
 Be sure 'tis better than what you work  
 to get

Serene and unafraid of solitude,  
 I worked the short days out,—and  
 watched the sun  
 On lund morns or monstrous after-  
 noons,  
 Like some Druidic idol's fiery brass  
 With fixed unflickering outline of  
 dead heat,  
 In which the blood of wretches pent  
 inside  
 Seemed oozing forth to incarnadine  
 the air,—  
 Push out through fog with his dilated  
 disc  
 And startle the slant roofs and chim-  
 ney-pots  
 With splashes of fierce colour Or I  
 saw  
 Fog only, the great tawny weltering  
 fog,  
 Involve the passive city, strangle  
 it  
 Alive, and draw it off into the void,  
 Spres, bridges, streets, and squares,  
 as if a sponge  
 Had wiped out London,—or as noon  
 and night  
 Had clapped together and utterly  
 struck out  
 The intermediate time, undoing them-  
 selves  
 In the act Your city poets see such  
 things,  
 Not despicable Mountains of the  
 south  
 When, drunk and mad with elemental  
 wines,  
 They rend the seamless mist and  
 stand up bare,  
 Make fewer singers, haply No one  
 sings,  
 Descending Sinai on Parnassus  
 mount,  
 You take a mule to climb, and not a  
 muse,  
 Except in fable and figure forests  
 chant

Their anthems to themselves, and  
 leave you dumb  
 But sit in London at the day's decline,  
 And view the city perish in the mist  
 Like Pharaoh's armaments in the deep  
 Red Sea —  
 The chariots, horsemen, footmen, all  
 the host,  
 Sucked down and choked to silence—  
 then, surprised  
 By a sudden sense of vision and of  
 tune,  
 You feel as conquerors though you  
 did not fight,  
 And you and Israel's other singing  
 girls,  
 Ay, Miriam with them, sing the song  
 you choose

I worked with patience which means  
 almost power  
 I did some excellent things indiffer-  
 ently,  
 Some bad things excellently Both  
 were praised,  
 The latter loudest And by such a  
 time  
 That I myself had set them down as  
 sins  
 Scarce worth the price of sackcloth,  
 week by week,  
 Arrived some letter through the  
 sedulous post  
 Like these I've read, and yet dissimi-  
 lar  
 With pretty maiden seals,—initials  
 twined  
 Of lilies, or a heart marked *Emily*  
 (Convicting *Emily* of being all heart),  
 Or rarer tokens from young bachelors  
 Who wrote from college (with the same  
 goosequill,  
 Suppose, they had just been plucked  
 of) and a snatch  
 From Horace, "Collegisse juvat," set  
 Upon the first page Many a letter  
 signed  
 Or unsigned, showing the writers at  
 eighteen  
 Had lived too long, though every muse  
 should help  
 The daylight, holding candles,—com-  
 pliments  
 To smile or sigh at Such could pass  
 with me

No more than coins from Moscow  
circulate  
At Paris Would ten roubles buy a  
tag  
Of ribbon on the boulevard, worth a  
sou ?  
I smiled that all this youth should  
love me —sighed  
That such a love could scarcely raise  
them up  
To love what was more worthy than  
myself,  
Then sighed again, again, less gener-  
ously,  
To think the very love they lavished  
so,  
Proved me inferior The strong loved  
me not,  
And he my cousin Romney  
did not write  
I felt the silent finger of his scorn  
Prick every bubble of my frivolous  
fame  
As my breath blew it, and resolve it  
back  
To the air it came from Oh, I justi-  
fied  
The measure he had taken of my  
height  
The thing was plain—he was not  
wrong a line,  
I played at art made thrusts with a  
toy-sword  
Amused the lads and maidens  
Came a sigh  
Deep, hoarse with resolution,—I  
would work  
To better ends, or play in earnest  
“Heavens,  
I think I should be almost popular  
If this went on!”—I ripped my  
verses up,  
And found no blood upon the rapier’s  
point,  
The heart in them was just an em-  
bryo’s heart,  
Which never yet had beat, that it  
should die  
Just gasps of make-believe galvanic  
life,  
Mere tones, morganised to any tune

And yet I felt it in me where it burnt,  
Like those hot fire-seeds of creation  
held

In Jove’s clenched palm before the  
worlds were sown,—  
But I—I was not Juno even ! my  
hand  
Was shut in weak convulsion, woman’s  
ill,  
And when I yearned to loose a finger  
—lo,  
The nerve revolted ’Tis the same  
even now  
This hand may never, haply, open  
large,  
Before the spark is quenched, or the  
palm charred,  
To prove the power not else than by  
the pain

It burns, it burnt—my whole life  
burnt with it  
And light, not sunlight and not torch-  
light, flashed  
My steps out through the slow and  
difficult road  
I had grown distrustful of too forward  
Springs,  
The season’s books in drear significance  
Of morals, dropping round me Lively  
books ?  
The ash has livelier verdure than the  
yew,  
And yet the yew’s green longer, and  
alone  
Found worthy of the holy Christmas  
time  
We’ll plant more yews if possible,  
albeit  
We plant the graveyards with them  
Day and night  
I worked my rhythmic thought, and  
furrowed up  
Both watch and slumber with long  
lines of life  
Which did not suit their season The  
rose fell  
From either cheek, my eyes globed  
luminous  
Through orbits of blue shadow, and  
my pulse  
Would shudder along the purple-  
veined wrist  
Like a shot bird Youth’s stern, set  
face to face  
With youth’s ideal and when people  
came  
And said, “You work too much, you  
are looking ill,”

I smiled for pity of them who pitied  
me,  
And thought I should be better soon  
perhaps  
For those ill looks Observe—"I"  
means in youth  
Just I the conscious and eternal  
soul  
With all its ends, and not the outside  
life,  
The parcel-man, the doublet of the  
flesh,  
The so much liver, lung, integument,  
Which make the sum of "I" here-  
after when  
World-talkers talk of doing well or  
ill  
I prosper, if I gain a step, although  
A nail then pierced my foot although  
my brain  
Embracing any truth, froze paralysed,  
I prosper I but change my instru-  
ment,  
I break the spade off, digging deep for  
gold,  
And catch the mattock up  
I worked on, on  
Through all the bristling fence of nights  
and days  
Which hedges time in from the eterri-  
ties,  
I struggled, never stopped to  
note the stakes  
Which hurt me in my course The  
midnight oil  
Would stink sometimes, there came  
some vulgar needs  
I had to live, that therefore I might  
work,  
And, being but poor, I was con-  
strained, for life,  
To work with one hand for the book-  
sellers,  
While working with the other for my-  
self  
And art You swim with feet as well  
as hands,  
Or make small way I apprehended  
this,—  
In England, no one lives by verse that  
lives,  
And, apprehending, I resolved by  
prose  
To make a space to sphere my living  
verse  
I wrote for cyclopædias, magazines,

And weekly papers, holding up my  
name  
To keep it from the mud I learnt  
the use  
Of the editorial "we" in a review,  
As courtly ladies the fine trick of  
trains,  
And swept it grandly through the open  
doors  
As if one could not pass through doors  
at all  
Save so encumbered I wrote tales  
beside,  
Carved many an article on cherry-  
stones  
To suit light readers,—something in  
the lines  
Revealing, it was said, the mallet-  
hand,  
But that, I'll never vouch for What  
you do  
For bread, will taste of common grain,  
not grapes,  
Although you have a vineyard in  
Champagne —  
Much less in Nephelococcygia,  
As mine was, peradventure  
Having bread  
For just so many days, just breathing  
room  
For body and verse, I stood up  
straight and worked  
My ventable work And as the soul  
Which grows within a child, makes  
the child grow —  
Or as the fiery sap, the touch from  
God,  
Careering through a tree, dilates the  
bark,  
And roughs with scale and knob before  
it strikes  
The summer foliage out in a green  
flame—  
So life, in deepening with me, deepened  
all  
The course I took, the work I did In-  
deed,  
The academic law convinced of  
sin,  
The critics cried out on the falling off,  
Regretting the first manner But I felt  
My heart's life throbbing in my verse  
to show  
It lived, it also—certes incomplete,  
Disordered with all Adam in the  
blood,

But even its very tumours, warts, and  
wens,  
Still organised by, and implying life

A lady called upon me on such a day  
She had the low voice of your English  
dames,  
Unused, it seems to need rise half a note  
To catch attention,—and their quiet  
mood,  
As if they lived too high above the  
earth

For that to put them out in anything  
So gentle, because verily so proud,  
So wary and afear'd of hurting you,  
By no means that you are not really  
vile,

But that they would not touch you  
with their foot  
To push you to your place, so self-  
possessed

Yet gracious and conciliating it takes  
An effort in their presence to speak  
truth

You know the sort of woman,—bril-  
liant stuff,

And out of nature "Lady Walde-  
mar"

She said her name quite simply, as if  
it meant

Not much indeed, but something,—  
took my hands,

And smiled, as if her smile could help  
my case

And dropped her eyes on me, and let  
them melt

"Is this," she said, "the Muse?"  
"No sybil even,"

I answered, "since she fails to guess  
the cause

Which taxed you with this visit,  
madam"

"Good"

She said, "I like to be sincere at once,  
Perhaps, if I had found a literal Muse,  
The visit might have taxed me As  
it is,

You wear your blue so chiefly in your  
eyes

My fair Aurora in a frank good way,  
It comforts me entirely for your fame  
As well as for the trouble of my ascent  
To this Olympus"

There, a silver laugh  
Ran rippling through her quickened  
little breaths

The steep stair somewhat justified  
"But still  
Your ladyship has left me curious why  
You dared the risk of finding the said  
Muse?"

"Ah,—keep me, notwithstanding, to  
the point,  
Like any pedant? Is the blue in eyes  
As awful as in stockings, after all,  
I wonder, that you'd have my business  
out

Before I breathe—exact the epic  
plunge  
In spite of gasps? Well, naturally you  
think

I've come here, as the lion-hunters go  
To deserts to secure you, with a trap,  
For exhibition in my drawing-rooms  
On zoologic soirees? Not in the  
least

Roar softly at me, I am frivolous,  
I dare say, I have played at lions, too,  
Like other women of my class,—but  
now

I meet my lion simply as Androcles  
Met his when at his mercy"  
So, she bent

Her head, as queens may mock,—then  
lifting up

Her eyelids with a real grave queenly  
look,

Which ruled, and would not spare, not  
even herself,—

"I think you have a cousin —Rom-  
ney Leigh"

"You bring a word from him?"—  
my eyes leapt up

To the very height of hers,— "a word  
from him?"

"I bring a word about him, actually  
But first,—she pressed me with her  
urgent eyes—

"You do not love him,—you?"  
"You're frank at least

In putting questions, madam," I  
replied,

"I love my cousin cousinly—no more"

"I guessed as much I'm ready to  
be frank

In answering also, if you'll question  
me,

Or even with something less You  
stand outside,

You artist women, of the common sex,

You share not with us and exceed us  
 so  
 Perhaps by what you're mulcted in,  
 your hearts  
 Being starved to make your heads  
 so run the old  
 Traditions of you I can therefore  
 speak,  
 Without the natural shame which  
 creatures feel  
 When speaking on their level, to their  
 like  
 There's many a papist she, would  
 rather die  
 Than own to her maid she put a  
 ribbon on  
 To catch the indifferent eye of such a  
 man,—  
 Who yet would count adulteries on  
 her beads  
 At holy Mary's shrine, and never  
 blush,  
 Because the saints are so far off, we  
 lose  
 All modesty before them Thus, to-  
 day  
 'Tis I, love Romney Leigh "  
 "Forbear," I cried  
 "If here's no Muse, still less is any  
 saint,  
 Nor even a friend, that Lady Walde-  
 mar  
 Should make confessions "  
 "That's unkindly said  
 If no friend, what forbids to make a  
 friend  
 To join to our confession ere we have  
 done ?  
 I love your cousin If it seems un-  
 wise  
 To say so, it's still foolisher (we're  
 frank)  
 To feel so My first husband left me  
 young,  
 And pretty enough, so please you, and  
 rich enough,  
 To keep my booth in Mayfair with  
 the rest  
 To happy issues There are marquises  
 Would serve seven years to call me  
 wife, I know  
 And, after seven, I might consider it,  
 For there's some comfort in a mar-  
 quisate  
 When all's said,—yes, but after the  
 seven years,

I, now, love Romney You put up  
 your lip,  
 So like a Leigh ! so like him !—Pardon  
 me,  
 I am well aware I do not derogate  
 In loving Romney Leigh The name  
 is good,  
 The means are excellent, but the  
 man, the man—  
 Heaven help us both,—I am near as  
 mad as he,  
 In loving such an one "  
 She slowly swung  
 Her heavy ringlets till they touched  
 her smile,  
 As reasonably sorry for herself,  
 And thus continued,—  
 "Of a truth, Miss Leigh,  
 I have not, without struggle, come to  
 this  
 I took a master in the German tongue,  
 I gamed a little went to Paris twice,  
 But, after all, this love ! you eat  
 of love,  
 And do as vile a thing as if you ate  
 Of garlic—which, whatever else you  
 eat,  
 Tastes uniformly acrid, till your peach  
 Reminds you of your onion Am I  
 coarse ?  
 Well, love's coarse, nature's coarse—  
 ah, there's the rub !  
 We fair fine ladies, who park out our  
 lives  
 From common sheep-paths, cannot  
 help the crows  
 From flying over,—we're as natural  
 still  
 As Blowsalinda Drape us perfectly  
 In Lyons velvet,—we are not, for  
 that,  
 Lay-figures, look you ! we have hearts  
 within,  
 Warm, live, improvident indecent  
 hearts,  
 As ready for distracted ends and acts  
 As any distressed sempstress of them  
 all  
 That Romney groans and toils for  
 We catch love  
 And other fevers in the vulgar way,  
 Love will not be outwitted by our  
 wit  
 Nor outrun by our equipages —mine  
 Persisted, spite of efforts All my  
 cards

Turned up but Romney Leigh, my  
 German stopped  
 At germane Wertherism, my Paris  
 rounds  
 Returned me from the Champs Ely-  
 sées just  
 A ghost, and sighing like Dido's I  
 came home  
 Uncured,—convicted rather to myself  
 Of being in love in love! That's  
 coarse you'll say  
 I'm talking garlic "

Coldly I replied  
 "Apologise for atheism not love!  
 For me, I do believe in love and God  
 I know my cousin Lady Waldemar  
 I know not yet I say as much as this—  
 Whoever loves him, let her not excuse  
 But cleanse herself, that, loving such  
 a man,  
 She may not do it with such unworthy  
 love  
 He cannot stoop and take it "

"That is said  
 Austerely, like a youthful prophetess  
 Who knits her brows across her pretty  
 eyes  
 To keep them back from following the  
 grey flight  
 Of doves between the temple-columns  
 Dear,  
 Be kinder with me Let us two be  
 friends  
 I'm a mere woman,—the more weak  
 perhaps  
 Through being so proud, you're  
 better, as for him  
 He's best Indeed he builds his good-  
 ness up  
 So high, it topples down to the other  
 side,  
 And makes a sort of badness, there's  
 the worst  
 I have to say against your cousin's  
 best!  
 And so be mild, Aurora, with my  
 worst,  
 For his sake, if not mine "

"I own myself  
 Incredulous of confidence like this  
 Availing him or you "

"And I myself  
 Of being worthy of him with any love  
 In your sense I am not so—let it pass  
 And yet I save him if I marry him,  
 Let that pass too "

"Pass, pass! we play police  
 Upon my cousin's life to indicate  
 What may or may not pass?" I cried  
 "He knows

What's worthy of him, the choice  
 remains with *him*,  
 And what he chooses, act or wife, I  
 think  
 I shall not call unworthy, I, for one "

"'Tis somewhat rashly said," she  
 answered slow

"Now let's talk reason, though we  
 talk of love

Your cousin Romney Leigh's a mon-  
 ster, there,

The world's out fairly, let me prove  
 the fact

We'll take, say, that most perfect of  
 antiques,

They call the 'Genius' of the Vatican,  
 Which seems too beauteous to endure  
 itself

In this mixed world, and fasten it for  
 once

Upon the torso of the 'Drunken Faun'  
 (Who might limp surely, if he did not  
 dance),

Instead of Buonarroti's mask what  
 then?

We show the sort of monster Romney  
 is,

With godlike virtues and heroic aims  
 Subjoined to limping possibilities  
 Of misshapen human nature Grant  
 the man

Twice godlike, twice heroic,—still he  
 limps,

And here's the point we come to "

"Parc'on me,  
 But, Lady Waldemar, the point's the  
 thing

We never come to "

"Caustic, insolent  
 At need! I like you"—(there, she  
 took my hands)

"And now my lioness, help Androcles,  
 For all your roaring Help me! for  
 myself

I would not say so—but for him He  
 limps

So certainly, he'll fall into the pit  
 A week hence,—so I lose him—so he  
 is lost!

And when he's fairly married, he a  
 Leigh,

To a girl of doubtful life, undoubtful  
 birth,  
 Starved out in London, till her coarse-  
 grained hands  
 Are whiter than her morals,—you, for  
 one,  
 May call his choice most worthy ”  
 “ Marned ! lost !  
 He Romney ! ”  
 “ Ah, you’re moved at last,” she  
 said  
 “ These monsters, set out in the open  
 sun,  
 Of course throw monstrous shadows  
 those who think  
 Awry will scarce act straightly Who  
 but he ?  
 And who but you can wonder ? He  
 has been mad,  
 The whole world knows, since first,  
 a nominal man,  
 He soured the proctors, tried the  
 gownsmen’s wits  
 With equal scorn of triangles and  
 wine,  
 And took no honours, yet was honour-  
 able  
 They’ll tell you he lost count of  
 Homer’s ships  
 In Melbourne’s Poor-Bills, Ashley’s  
 Factory Bills,—  
 Ignored the Aspasia we all dare to  
 praise,  
 For other women, dear, we could not  
 name  
 Because we’re decent Well, he had  
 some right  
 On his side probably, men always  
 have,  
 Who go absurdly wrong The living  
 boor,  
 Who brews your ale, exceeds in vital  
 worth  
 Dead Cæsar who ‘ stops bungholes ’ in  
 the cask,  
 And also, to do good is excellent,  
 For persons of his income, even to  
 boors  
 I sympathise with all such things But  
 he  
 Went mad upon them madder  
 and more mad,  
 From college times to these,—as, going  
 down hill,  
 The faster still, the farther ! you must  
 know

Your Leigh by heart he has sown his  
 black young curls  
 With bleaching cares of half a million  
 men  
 Already If you do not starve, or sin,  
 You’re nothing to him Pay the  
 income-tax  
 And break your heart upon ’t  
 he’ll scarce be touched,  
 But come upon the parish, qualified  
 For the parish stocks, and Romney  
 will be there  
 To call you brother, sister or perhaps  
 A tenderer name still Had I any  
 chance  
 With Mister Leigh, who am Lady  
 Waldemar,  
 And never committed felony ? ”  
 “ You speak  
 Too bitterly,” I said, “ for the literal  
 truth ”  
 “ The truth is bitter Here’s a man  
 who looks  
 For ever on the ground ! you must be  
 low,  
 Or else a pictured ceiling overhead,  
 Good painting thrown away For me,  
 I’ve done  
 What women may (we’re somewhat  
 limited,  
 We modest women), but I’ve done my  
 best  
 —How men are perjured when they  
 swear our eyes  
 Have meaning in them ! they’re just  
 blue or brown,—  
 They just can drop their lids a little  
 In fact,  
 Mine did more, for I read half Fourier  
 through,  
 Proudhon, Considerant, and Louis  
 Blanc,  
 With various others of his socialists,  
 And if I had been a fathomless in love,  
 Had cured myself with gaping As it  
 was,  
 I quoted from them prettily enough  
 Perhaps to make them sound half  
 rational  
 To a saner man than he, whene’er we  
 talked,  
 (For which I dodged occasion)—learnt  
 by heart  
 His speeches in the Commons and  
 elsewhere



Upon the social question, heaped re-  
ports  
Of wicked women and penitentiaries,  
On all my tables, with a place for Sue,  
And gave my name to swell subscrip-  
tion-lists  
Toward keeping up the sun at nights  
in heaven,  
And other possible ends All things  
I did,  
Except the impossible such as  
wearing gowns  
Provided by the Ten Hours' move-  
ment ' there,  
I stopped—we must stop somewhere  
He, meanwhile,  
Unmoved as the Indian tortoise  
'neath the world  
Let all that noise go on upon his back  
He would not disconcert or throw me  
out,  
'Twas well to see a woman of my class  
With such a dawn of conscience For  
the heart,  
Made firewood for his sake, and flam-  
ing up  
To his very face he warmed his  
feet at it,  
But deigned to let my carriage stop  
him short  
In park or street,—he leaning on the  
door,  
With news of the committee which  
sate last  
On pickpockets at suck "  
" You jest—you jest "  
" As martyrs jest, dear (if you've  
read their lives)  
Upon the axe which kills them When  
all's done  
By me, for him—you'll ask him  
presently  
The colour of my hair—he cannot tell,  
Or answers 'dark' at random,—  
while, be sure,  
He's absolute on the figure, five or ten,  
Of my last subscription Is it bear-  
able,  
And I a woman ? "  
" Is it reparable,  
Though I were a man ? "  
" I know not That's to prove  
But, first, this shameful marriage "  
" Ay ? " I cried  
" Then really there's a marriage ? "

" Yesterday  
I held him fast upon it ' Mister Leigh,  
Said I, ' shut up a thing, it makes  
more noise  
The boiling town keeps secrets ill,  
I've known  
Yours since last week Forgive my  
knowledge so  
You feel I'm not the woman of the  
world  
The world thinks, you have borne  
with me before,  
And used me in your noble work,  
our work,  
And now you shall not cast me off  
because  
You're at the difficult point, the join  
'Tis true  
Even I can scarce admit the cogency  
Of such a marriage where you  
do not love  
(Except the class), yet marry and  
throw your name  
Down to the gutter, for a fire-escape  
To future generations ' it's sublime,  
A great example,—a true Genesis  
Of the opening social era But take  
heed,  
This virtuous act must have a patent  
weight,  
Or loses half its virtue Make it tell,  
Interpret it, and set in the light,  
And do not muffle it in a winter-  
cloak  
As a vulgar bit of shame,—as if, at  
best,  
A Leigh had made a misalliance and  
blushed  
A Howard should know it Then, I  
pressed him more—  
' He would not choose ' I said, ' that  
even his kin,  
Aurora Leigh even should  
conceive his act  
Less sacrifice, more appetite ' At  
which  
He grew so pale, dear, to the  
lips, I knew  
I had touched him ' Do you know  
her,' he inquired,  
' My cousin Aurora ? ' ' Yes,' I said  
and lied  
(But truly we all know you by your  
books),  
And so I offered to come straight to  
you,

Explain the subject, justify the cause,  
And take you with me to St Margaret's  
Court

To see this miracle, this Marian Erle,  
This drover's daughter (she's not  
pretty he swears)

Upon whose finger, exquisitely pricked  
By a hundred needles, we're to hang  
the tie

'Twixt class and class in England,—  
thus, indeed,

By such a presence, yours and mine,  
to lift

The match up from the doubtful  
place At once

He thanked me, sighing murmured  
to himself,

'She'll do it perhaps, she's noble,'—  
thanked me twice,

And promised, as my guerdon, to put  
off

His marriage for a month "

I answered then  
" I understand your drift imperfectly

You wish to lead me to my cousin's  
betrothed,

To touch her hand if worthy, and hold  
her hand

If feeble, thus to justify his match  
So be it then But how this serves  
your ends

And how the strange confession of  
your love

Serves this I have to learn—I cannot  
see "

She knit her restless forehead " Then  
despite,

Aurora, that most radiant morning  
name,

You're dull as any London afternoon  
I wanted time,—and gained it,—

wanted you,  
And gain you ! You will come and see  
the girl

In whose most prodigal eyes, the  
lineal pearl

And pride of all your lofty race of  
Leighs

Is destined to solution Authorised  
By sight and knowledge, then, you'll  
speak your mind

And prove to Romney, in your bril-  
liant way,

He'll wrong the people and postenty

(Says such a thing is bad for you and me,  
And you fail utterly,) by concluding  
thus

An execrable marriage Break it up,  
Disroot it—peradventure, presently.

We'll plant a better fortune in its  
place

Be good to me, Aurora scorn me less  
For saying the thing I should not.

Well I know

I should not I have kept as others  
have,

The iron rule of womanly reserve  
In lip and life, till now I wept a week

Before I came here "—Ending, she  
was pale,

The last words, haughtily said, were  
tremulous

Thus palfrey pranced in harness,  
arched her neck,

And, only by the foam upon the bit,  
You saw she champed against it

Then I rose  
" I love love truth's no cleaner thing  
than love

I comprehend a love so fiery hot  
It burns its natural veil of august  
shame

And stands sublimely in the nude, as  
chaste

As Medicean Venus But I know,  
A love that burns through veils, will  
burn through masks,

And shrivel up treachery What  
love and lie !

Nay—go to the opera ! your love's-  
curable "

" I love and lie ? " she said—" I lie,  
forsooth ? "

And beat her taper foot upon the floor,  
And smiled against the shoe —

" You're hard, Miss Leigh,  
Unversed in current phrases —

Bowling-greens  
Of poets are fresher than the world's  
highways,

Forgive me that I rashly blew the dust  
Which dims our hedges even, in your  
eyes,

And vexed you so much You find,  
probably,

No evil in this marriage —rather good  
Of innocence, to pastoralise in song -

You'll give the bond your signature,  
perhaps,

Beneath the lady's mark,—indifferent  
 That Romney chose a wife, could write  
 her name,  
 In witnessing he loved her "  
 "Loved!" I cried,  
 "Who tells you that he wants a wife  
 to love?"  
 He gets a horse to use, not love, I  
 think  
 There's work for wives as well,—and  
 after, straw,  
 When men are liberal For myself,  
 you err  
 Supposing power in me to break this  
 match  
 I could not do it, to save Romney's  
 life,  
 And would not, to save mine "  
 "You take it so,"  
 She said, "farewell then Write  
 your books in peace,  
 As far as may be for some secret stir  
 Now obvious to me,—for, most ob-  
 viously,  
 In coming hither I mistook the way "  
 Whereat she touched my hand, and  
 bent her head,  
 And floated from me like a silent  
 cloud  
 That leaves the sense of thunder  
 I drew breath,  
 Oppressed in my deliverance After  
 all  
 This woman breaks her social system  
 up  
 For love, so counted—the love pos-  
 sible  
 To such,—and lilies are still lilies,  
 pulled  
 By smutty hands, though spotted from  
 their white,  
 And thus she is better, haply, of her  
 kind,  
 Than Romney Leigh, who lives by  
 diagrams,  
 And crosses out the spontaneries  
 Of all his individual, personal life,  
 With formal universals As if man  
 Were set upon a high stool at a desk,  
 To keep God's books for Him, in red  
 and black  
 And feel by millions! What, if even  
 God  
 Were chiefly God by living out Him-  
 self  
 To an individualism of the Infinite,

Eterne, intense, profuse,—still throw  
 ing up  
 The golden spray of multitudinous  
 worlds  
 In measure to the proclive weight and  
 rush  
 Of His inner nature,—the spontane-  
 ous love  
 Still proof and outflow of spontaneous  
 life?  
 Then live, Aurora!  
 Two hours afterward,  
 Within St Margaret's Court I stood  
 alone,  
 Close-veiled A sick child, from an  
 ague-fit,  
 Whose wasted right hand gambled  
 'gainst his left  
 With an old brass button, in a blot of  
 sun,  
 Jeered weakly at me as I passed across  
 The uneven pavement, while a  
 woman, rouged  
 Upon the angular cheek-bones, her  
 chief torn,  
 Thin dangling locks, and flat lascivi-  
 ous mouth,  
 Cursed at a window, both ways, in  
 and out,  
 By turns some bed-ridden creature and  
 myself,—  
 "Lie still there, mother! liker the  
 dead dog  
 You'll be to-morrow What, we pick  
 our way,  
 Fine madam, with those damnable  
 small feet!  
 We cover up our face from doing good,  
 As if it were our purse! What brings  
 you here,  
 My lady? is't to find my gentleman  
 Who visits his tame pigeon in the  
 eaves?  
 Our cholera catch you with its cramps  
 and spasms,  
 And tumble up your good clothes, veil  
 and all,  
 And turn your whiteness dead-blue "  
 I looked up,  
 I think I could have walked through  
 hell that day,  
 And never flinched "The dear Christ  
 comfort you,"  
 I said, "you must have been most  
 miserable  
 To be so cruel,"—and I emptied out

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| <p>My purse upon the stones when, as I<br/>had cast<br/>The last charm in the cauldron, the<br/>whole court<br/>Went boiling, bubbling up, from all<br/>its doors<br/>And windows, with a hideous wail of<br/>laughs<br/>And roar of oaths, and blows perhaps<br/>I passed<br/>Too quickly for distinguishing<br/>and pushed<br/>A little side-door hanging on a hinge,<br/>And plunged into the dark, and<br/>groped and climbed<br/>The long, steep, narrow stair 'twixt<br/>broken rail<br/>And mildewed wall that let the plaster<br/>drop<br/>To startle me in the blackness Still,<br/>up, up!<br/>So high lived Romney's bride I<br/>paused at last<br/>Before a low door in the roof, and<br/>knocked,<br/>There came an answer like a hurried<br/>dove—<br/>"So soon? can that be Mister Leigh?<br/>so soon?"<br/>And as I entered, an ineffable face<br/>Met mine upon the threshold "Oh,<br/>not you,<br/>Not you!" the dropping of the<br/>voice implied,<br/>"Then, if not you, for me not any<br/>one"<br/>I looked her in the eyes, and held her<br/>hands,<br/>And said, "I am his cousin,—Rom-<br/>ney Leigh's,<br/>And here I'm come to see my cousin<br/>too"<br/>She touched me with her face and<br/>with her voice,<br/>This daughter of the people Such<br/>soft flowers,<br/>From such rough roots? the people,<br/>under there,<br/>Can sin so, curse so, look so, smell so<br/>fough!<br/>Yet have such daughters?<br/>Nowise beautiful<br/>Was Marian Erle She was not white<br/>nor brown,<br/>But could look either, like a mist that<br/>changed</p> | <p>According to being shone on more or<br/>less<br/>The hair, too, ran its opulence of curls<br/>In doubt 'twixt dark and bright, nor<br/>left you clear<br/>To name the colour Too much hair<br/>perhaps<br/>(I'll name a fault here) for so small a<br/>head,<br/>Which seemed to droop on that side<br/>and on this,<br/>As a full-blown rose uneasy with its<br/>weight,<br/>Though not a breath should trouble<br/>it Again,<br/>The dimple in the cheek had better<br/>gone<br/>With redder, fuller rounds and some-<br/>what large<br/>The mouth was, though the milky<br/>little teeth<br/>Dissolved it to so infantine a smile!<br/>For soon it smiled at me, the eyes<br/>smiled too,<br/>But 'twas as if remembering they had<br/>wept,<br/>And knowing they should, some day,<br/>weep again<br/>We talked She told me all her<br/>story out,<br/>Which I'll re-tell with fuller utter-<br/>ance,<br/>As coloured and confirmed in after-<br/>times<br/>By others, and herself too Marian<br/>Erle<br/>Was born upon the ledge of Malvern<br/>Hill<br/>To eastward, in a hut, built up at<br/>night<br/>To evade the landlord's eye, of mud<br/>and turf,<br/>Still liable, if once he looked that<br/>way,<br/>To being straight levelled, scattered<br/>by his foot,<br/>Like any other anthill Born, I say,<br/>God sent her to His world, com-<br/>missioned right<br/>Her human testimonials fully signed,<br/>Not scant in soul—complete in linea-<br/>ments,<br/>But others had to swindle her a place<br/>To wail in when she had come No<br/>place for her,</p> |
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By man's law ' born an outlaw, was  
 this babe  
 Her first cry in our strange and strang-  
 ling air,  
 When cast in spasms out by the shud-  
 dering womb,  
 Was wrong against the social code,—  
 forced wrong  
 What business had the baby to cry  
 there ?

I tell her story and grow passionate  
 She, Maran, did not tell it so, but  
 used  
 Meek words that made no wonder of  
 herself  
 For being so sad a creature " Mister  
 Leigh  
 Considered truly that such things  
 should change  
 They *will*, in heaven—but mean-  
 time, on the earth,  
 There's none can like a nettle as a  
 pink,  
 Except himself We're nettles, some  
 of us,  
 And give offence by the act of spring-  
 ing up  
 And, if we leave the damp side of the  
 wall,  
 The hoes, of course, are on us " So  
 she said

Her father earned his life by random  
 jobs  
 Despised by steadier workmen—  
 keeping swine  
 On commons, picking hops, or hurry-  
 ing on  
 The harvest at wet seasons,—or, at  
 need,  
 Assisting the Welsh drovers, when a  
 drove  
 Of startled horses plunged into the  
 mist  
 Below the mountain-road, and sowed  
 the wind  
 With wandering neighings In be-  
 tween the gaps  
 Of such irregular work, he drank and  
 slept,  
 And cursed his wife because, the pence  
 being out,  
 She could not buy more drink At  
 which she turned  
 (The worm) and beat her baby in re-  
 venge,

For her own broken heart There's  
 not a crime  
 But takes its proper change out still  
 in crime,  
 If once rung on the counter of this  
 world,  
 Let sinners look to it  
 Yet the outcast child,  
 For whom the very mother's face  
 forewent  
 The mother's special patience, lived  
 and grew,  
 Learnt early to cry low, and walk  
 alone,  
 With that pathetic vacillating  
 roll  
 Of the infant body on the uncertain  
 feet  
 (The earth being felt unstable ground  
 so soon),  
 At which most women's arms unclosed  
 at once  
 With irrepresive instinct Thus, at  
 three,  
 This poor weaned kid would run off  
 from the fold,  
 This babe would steal off from the  
 mother's chair,  
 And, creeping through the golden  
 walls of gorse,  
 Would find some keyhole toward the  
 secrecy  
 Of Heaven's high blue, and, nestling  
 down, peer out—  
 Oh, not to catch the angels at their  
 games,  
 She had never heard of angels,—but  
 to gaze  
 She knew not why, to see she knew  
 not what,  
 A-hungering outward from the barren  
 earth  
 For something like a joy She liked,  
 she said,  
 To dazzle black her sight against the  
 sky,  
 For then, it seemed, some grand blind  
 Love came down,  
 And groped her out, and clasped her  
 with a kiss,  
 She learnt God that way, and was  
 beat for it  
 Whenever she went home,—yet came  
 again,  
 As surely as the trapped hare, getting  
 free,

Returns to his form This grand  
 blind Love, she said,  
 This skyey father and mother both in  
 one,  
 Instructed her and civilised her more  
 Than even the Sunday-school did  
 afterward,  
 To which a lady sent her to learn  
 books  
 And sit upon a long bench in a row  
 With other children Well, she  
 laughed sometimes  
 To see them laugh and laugh, and moul  
 their texts,  
 But oft she was sorrowful with  
 noise,  
 And wondered if their mothers beat  
 them hard,  
 That ever they should laugh so There  
 was one  
 She loved indeed,—Rose Bell, a seven  
 years' child  
 So pretty and clever, who read syl-  
 lables  
 When Marian was at letters, she  
 would laugh  
 At nothing—hold your finger up, she  
 laughed,  
 Then shook her curls down on her  
 eyes and mouth  
 To hide her make-mirth from the  
 schoolmaster  
 And Rose's pelting glee, as frank as  
 rain  
 On cherry-blossoms, brightened  
 Marian too,  
 To see another merry whom she  
 loved  
 She whispered once (the children side  
 by side,  
 With mutual arms entwined about  
 their necks)  
 "Your mother lets you laugh so?"  
 "Ay," said Rose,  
 "She lets me She was dug into the  
 ground  
 Six years since, I being but a yearling  
 wean  
 Such mothers let us play and lose our  
 time,  
 And never scold nor beat us! don't  
 you wish  
 You had one like that?" There,  
 Marian breaking off  
 Looked suddenly in my face "Poor  
 Rose," said she,

"I heard her laugh last night in Ox-  
 ford Street  
 I'd pour out half my blood to stop  
 that laugh,—  
 Poor Rose, poor Rose!" said Marian  
 She resumed  
 It tried her, when she had learnt at  
 Sunday-school  
 What God was, what He wanted from  
 us all,  
 And how, in choosing sin, we vexed  
 the Christ,  
 To go straight home and hear her  
 father pull  
 The Name down on us from the  
 thunder-shelf,  
 Then drink away his soul into the  
 dark  
 From seeing judgment Father  
 mother, home,  
 Were God and Heaven reversed to her  
 the more  
 She knew of Right the more she  
 guessed their wrong,  
 Her price paid down for knowledge,  
 was to know  
 The vileness of her kindred through  
 her heart,  
 Her filial and tormented heart, hence-  
 forth,  
 They struck their blows at virtue  
 Oh, 'tis hard  
 To learn you have a Father up in  
 Heaven  
 By a gathering certain sense of being,  
 on earth  
 Still worse than orphaned 'tis too  
 heavy a grief,  
 The having to thank God for such a  
 joy!

And so passed Marian's life from year  
 to year  
 Her parents took her with them when  
 they tramped,  
 Dodged lanes and heaths, frequented  
 towns and fairs,  
 And once went farther and saw Man-  
 chester,  
 And once the sea, that blue end of the  
 world  
 That fair scroll-fims of a wicked book,—  
 And twice a prison,—back at inter-  
 vals,  
 Returning to the hills Hills draw  
 like heaven,

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| <p>And stronger sometimes, holding out<br/>their hands<br/>To pull you from the vile flats up to<br/>them,<br/>And though, perhaps, these strollers<br/>still strolled back,<br/>As sheep do, simply that they knew<br/>the way,<br/>They certainly felt bettered unaware<br/>Emerging from the social smut of<br/>towns<br/>To wipe their feet clean on the moun-<br/>tain-turf<br/>In which long wanderings, Marian<br/>lived and learned,<br/>Endured and learned The people<br/>on the roads<br/>Would stop and ask her how her eyes<br/>outgrew<br/>Her cheeks, and if she meant to lodge<br/>the birds<br/>In all that hair, and then they lifted<br/>her<br/>The miller in his cart, a mile or<br/>twain,<br/>The butcher's boy on horseback<br/>Often, too,<br/>The pedlar stopped, and tapped her on<br/>the head<br/>With absolute forefinger, brown and<br/>ringed,<br/>And asked if peradventure she could<br/>read!<br/>And when she answered "Ay," would<br/>toss her down<br/>Some stray odd volume from his<br/>heavy pack,<br/>A Thomson's "Seasons," mulcted of<br/>the "Spring,"<br/>Or half a play of Shakspeare's, torn<br/>across<br/>(She had to guess the bottom of a page<br/>By just the top sometimes,—as diffi-<br/>cult,<br/>As, sitting on the moon, to guess the<br/>earth!)</p> | <p>And oft the jangling influence jarred<br/>the child<br/>Like looking at a sunset full of grace<br/>Through a pothouse window while the<br/>drunken oaths<br/>Went on behind her, but she weeded<br/>out<br/>Her book-leaves, threw away the<br/>leaves that hurt<br/>(First tore them small, that none<br/>should find a word),<br/>And made a nosegay of the sweet and<br/>good<br/>To fold within her breast, and pore<br/>upon<br/>At broken moments of the noontide<br/>glare,<br/>When leave was given her to untie her<br/>cloak<br/>And rest upon the dusty roadside<br/>bank<br/>From the highway's dust Or oft,<br/>the journey done,<br/>Some city friend would lead her by<br/>the hand<br/>To hear a lecture at an institute<br/>And thus she had grown, this Marian<br/>Erle of ours,<br/>To no book-learning,—she was ignor-<br/>ant<br/>Of authors,—not in earshot of the<br/>things<br/>Out-spoken o'er the heads of common<br/>men,<br/>By men who are uncommon,—but<br/>within<br/>The cadenced hum of such, and<br/>capable<br/>Of catching from the fringes of the<br/>wind<br/>Some fragmentary phrases, here and<br/>there<br/>Of that fine music,—which, being<br/>carried in<br/>To her soul, had reproduced itself<br/>afresh<br/>In finer motions of the lips and lids<br/>She said, in speaking of it, "If a<br/>flower<br/>Were thrown you out of heaven at<br/>intervals,<br/>You'd soon attain to a trick of look-<br/>ing up —<br/>And so with her" She counted me<br/>her years,</p> |
| <p>Or else a sheaf of leaves (for that small<br/>Ruth's<br/>Small gleanings) torn out from the<br/>heart of books<br/>From Churchyard Elegies and Edens<br/>Lost,<br/>From Burns, and Bunyan, Selkirk,<br/>and Tom Jones<br/>'Twas somewhat hard to keep the<br/>things distinct,</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |

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| <p>Till I felt old, and then she counted<br/>me<br/>Her sorrowful pleasures, till I felt<br/>ashamed<br/>She told me she was almost glad and<br/>calm<br/>On such and such a season, sate and<br/>sewed,<br/>With no one to break up her crystal<br/>thoughts,<br/>While rhymes from lovely poems<br/>span around<br/>Their ringing circles of ecstatic<br/>tune,<br/>Beneath the moistened finger of the<br/>Hour<br/>Her parents called her a strange,<br/>sickly child,<br/>Not good for much, and given to sulk<br/>and stare<br/>And smile into the hedges and the<br/>clouds<br/>And tremble if one shook her from<br/>her fit<br/>By any blow, or word even Out-door<br/>jobs<br/>Went ill with her, and household<br/>quiet work,<br/>She was not born to Had they kept<br/>the north<br/>They might have had their penny-<br/>worth out of her,<br/>Like other parents in the factories<br/>(Your children work for you, not you<br/>for them,<br/>Or else they better had been choked<br/>with air<br/>The first breath drawn), but, in this<br/>tramping life,<br/>Was nothing to be done with such a<br/>child,<br/>But tramp and tramp And yet she<br/>knitted hose<br/>Not ill, and was not dull at needle-<br/>work,<br/>And all the country people gave her<br/>pence<br/>For darning stockings past their<br/>natural age,<br/>And patching petticoats from old to<br/>new,<br/>And other light work done for thrifty<br/>wives<br/>One day, said Marian,—the sun shone<br/>that day—</p> | <p>Her mother had been badly beat, and<br/>felt<br/>The bruises sore about her wretched<br/>soul<br/>(That must have been) she came in<br/>suddenly,<br/>And snatching, in a sort of breathless<br/>rage,<br/>Her daughter's headgear comb, let<br/>down the hair<br/>Upon her, like a sudden waterfall,<br/>And drew her drenched and passive,<br/>by the arm,<br/>Outside the hut they lived in When<br/>the child<br/>Could clear her blinded face from all<br/>that stream<br/>Of tresses there, a man stood,<br/>with beast's eyes,<br/>That seemed as they would swallow<br/>her alive,<br/>Complete in body and spirit, hair and<br/>all —<br/>With burning stertorous breath that<br/>hurt her cheek<br/>He breathed so near The mother<br/>held her tight<br/>Saying hard between her teeth—<br/>"Why wench, why wench,<br/>The squire speaks to you now—the<br/>squire's too good,<br/>He means to set you up, and comfort<br/>us<br/>Be mannerly at least" The child<br/>turned round,<br/>And looked up piteous in the mother's<br/>face<br/>(Be sure that mother's death-bed will<br/>not want<br/>Another devil to damn, than such a<br/>look)<br/>"Oh, mother!" then, with desperate<br/>glance to heaven,<br/>"God, free me from my mother," she<br/>shrieked out,<br/>"These mothers are too dreadful"<br/>And, with force<br/>As passionate as fear, she tore her<br/>hands<br/>Like lilies from the rocks, from hers<br/>and his,<br/>And sprang down, bounded headlong<br/>down the steep<br/>Away from both—away, if possible,<br/>As far as God,—away! They yelled<br/>at her,</p> |
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| <p>As famished hounds at a hare She<br/>         heard them yell,<br/>         She felt her name hiss after her from<br/>         the hills,<br/>         Like shot from guns On, on And<br/>         now she had cast<br/>         The voices off with the uplands On<br/>         Mad fear<br/>         Was running in her feet and killing<br/>         the ground,<br/>         The white roads curled as if she burnt<br/>         them up<br/>         The green fields melted, wayside trees<br/>         fell back<br/>         To make room for her Then, her<br/>         head grew vexed,<br/>         Trees, fields, turned on her and ran<br/>         after her,<br/>         She heard the quick pants of the hills<br/>         behind,<br/>         Their keen air pricked her neck She<br/>         had lost her feet,<br/>         Could run no more, yet, somehow,<br/>         went as fast,—<br/>         The horizon, red 'twixt steeples in the<br/>         east,<br/>         So sucked her forward, forward, while<br/>         her heart<br/>         Kept swelling, swelling, till it swelled<br/>         so big<br/>         It seemed to fill her body, then it<br/>         burst,<br/>         And overflowed the world and<br/>         swamped the light,<br/>         "And now I am dead and safe,"<br/>         thought Marian Erle—<br/>         She had dropped she had fainted<br/>         As the sense returned,<br/>         The night had passed—not life's<br/>         night She was 'ware<br/>         Of heavy tumbling motions, creaking<br/>         wheels,<br/>         The driver shouting to the lazy team<br/>         That swung their rankling bells<br/>         against her brain,<br/>         While, through the waggon's cover-<br/>         ture and chunks,<br/>         The cruel yellow morning pecked at<br/>         her<br/>         Alive or dead, upon the straw inside,—<br/>         At which her soul ached back into<br/>         the dark<br/>         And prayed, "no more of that" A<br/>         waggoner<br/>         Had found her in a ditch beneath the<br/>         moon,</p> | <p>As white as moonshine, save for the<br/>         oozing blood<br/>         At first he thought her dead, but<br/>         when he had wiped<br/>         The mouth and heard it sigh, he<br/>         raised her up,<br/>         And laid her in his waggon in the<br/>         straw,<br/>         And so conveyed her to the distant<br/>         town<br/>         To which his business called himself<br/>         and left<br/>         That heap of misery at the hospital<br/>         She stirred,—the place seemed new<br/>         and strange as death<br/>         The white strait bed, with others<br/>         strait and white,<br/>         Like graves dug side by side, at meas-<br/>         ured lengths,<br/>         And quiet people walking in and out<br/>         With wonderful low voices and soft<br/>         steps,<br/>         And appanitional equal care for each,<br/>         Astonished her with order silence,<br/>         law<br/>         And when a gentle hand held out a<br/>         cup,<br/>         She took it, as you do at Sacrament<br/>         Half awed, half melted,—not being<br/>         used, indeed,<br/>         To so much love as makes the form of<br/>         love<br/>         And courtesy of manners Delicate<br/>         drinks<br/>         And rare white bread, to which some<br/>         dying eyes<br/>         Were turned in observation O my<br/>         God,<br/>         How sick we must be, ere we make<br/>         men just!<br/>         I think it frets the saints in heaven to<br/>         see<br/>         How many desolate creatures on the<br/>         earth<br/>         Have learnt the simple dues of fel-<br/>         lowship<br/>         And social comfort, in a hospital,<br/>         As Marian did She lay there, stunned<br/>         half tranced,<br/>         And wished, at intervals of growing<br/>         sense,<br/>         She might be sicker yet, if sickness<br/>         made<br/>         The world so marvellous kind, the air<br/>         so hushed,</p> |
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And all her wake-time quiet as a sleep,  
 For now she understood (as such things were)  
 How sickness ended very oft in heaven,  
 Among the unspoken raptures Yet more sick,  
 And sure her happy Then she dropped her lids,  
 And, folding up her hands as flowers at night,  
 Would lose no moment of the blessed time

She lay and seethed in fever many weeks,  
 But youth was strong and overcame the test,  
 Revolted soul and flesh were reconciled  
 And fetched back to the necessary day  
 And daylight duties She could creep about  
 The long bare rooms, and stare out drearily  
 From any narrow window on the street,  
 Till some one, who had nursed her as a friend,  
 Said coldly to her, as an enemy,  
 "She had leave to go next week, being well enough,"  
 While only her heart ached "Go next week," thought she,  
 "Next week! how would it be with her next week,  
 Let out into that terrible street alone  
 Among the pushing people to go where?"

One day, the last before the dreaded last,  
 Among the convalescents like herself  
 Prepared to go next morning she sate dumb  
 And heard half absently the women talk,  
 How one was famished for her baby's cheeks—  
 "The little wretch would know her! a year old!"  
 And lively, like his father! "one was keen  
 To get to work and fill some clamorous mouths,"

And one was tender for her dear good-man  
 Who had missed her sorely,—and one, querulous  
 "Would pay those scandalous neighbours who had dared  
 To talk about her as already dead,"—  
 And one was proud "and if her sweetheart Luke  
 Had left her for a ruddier face than hers  
 (The gossip would be seen through at a glance),  
 Sweet riddance of such sweethearts—let him hang!"  
 'Twere good to have been as sick for such an end"

And while they talked, and Marian felt the worse  
 For having missed the worst of all their wrongs,  
 A visitor was ushered through the wards  
 And paused among the talkers  
 "When he looked,  
 It was as if he spoke, and when he spoke  
 He sang perhaps" said Marian,  
 "could she tell?"  
 She only knew" (so much she had chronicled,  
 As seraphs might, the making of the sun)  
 "That he who came and spake, was Romney Leigh,  
 And then, and there, she saw and heard him first"  
 And when it was her turn to have the race  
 Upon her,—all those buzzing pallid lips  
 Being satisfied with comfort—when he changed  
 To Marian, saying "And you? you're going, where?"—  
 She, moveless as a worm beneath a stone  
 Which some one's stumbling foot has spurned aside,  
 Writhed suddenly, astonished with the light,  
 And breaking into sobs cried, "Where I go?"  
 None asked me till this moment Can I say

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| Where I go ? when it has not seemed<br>worth while                                                   | The difference was the miracle," said<br>she                                  |
| To God Himself, Who thinks of every-<br>one,                                                         | Then catching up her smile to ravish-<br>ment,                                |
| To think of me, and fix where I shall<br>go ? "                                                      | She added quickly, " I repeat his<br>words,                                   |
| " So young," he gently asked her,<br>" you have lost                                                 | But not his tones can anyone repeat<br>The music of an organ, out of church ? |
| Your father and your mother ? "                                                                      | And when he said ' poor child,' I shut<br>my eyes                             |
| " Both," she said,                                                                                   | To feel how tenderly his voice broke<br>through,                              |
| " Both lost ! my father was burnt up<br>with gun                                                     | As the ointment-box broke on the<br>Holy feet                                 |
| Or ever I sucked milk, and so is lost                                                                | To let out the rich medicative nard "                                         |
| My mother sold me to a man last<br>month,                                                            | She told me how he had raised and<br>rescued her                              |
| And so my mother's lost, 'tis mani-<br>fest                                                          | With reverent pity, as, in touching<br>grief,                                 |
| And I, who fled from her for miles<br>and miles,                                                     | He touched the wounds of Christ,—<br>and made her feel                        |
| As if I had caught sight of the fires of<br>hell                                                     | Moreself-respecting Hope, he called,<br>belief                                |
| Through some wild gap (she was my<br>mother, sir),                                                   | In God,—work, worship there-<br>fore let us pray !                            |
| It seems I shall be lost too, presently,<br>And so we end, all three of us "                         | And thus, to snatch her soul from<br>atheism,                                 |
| " Poor child ! "                                                                                     | And keep it stainless from her mother's<br>face,                              |
| He said,—with such a pity in his voice,<br>It soothed her more than her own<br>tears,—" poor child ! | He sent her to a famed sempstress-<br>house                                   |
| 'Tis simple that betrayal by mother's<br>love                                                        | Far off in London, there to work and<br>hope                                  |
| Should bring despair of God's too<br>Yet be taught ,                                                 | With that, they parted She kept<br>sight of Heaven                            |
| He's better to us than many mothers<br>are,                                                          | But not of Romney He had good to do                                           |
| And children cannot wander beyond<br>reach                                                           | To others through the days and<br>through the nights,                         |
| Of the sweep of His white raiment<br>Touch and hold !                                                | She sewed and sewed and sewed<br>She brooded sometimes                        |
| And if you weep still, weep where<br>John was laid                                                   | And wondered, while, along the<br>tawny light,                                |
| While Jesus loved him "                                                                              | She struck the new thread into her<br>needle's eye,                           |
| " She could say the words,"                                                                          | How people, without mothers on the<br>hills,                                  |
| She told me, " exactly as he uttered<br>them                                                         | Could choose the town to live in !—<br>then she drew                          |
| A year back, since, in any<br>doubt or dark,                                                         | The stitch and mused how Romney's<br>face would look,                         |
| They came out like the stars, and<br>shone on her                                                    | And if 'twere likely he'd remember<br>hers,                                   |
| With just their comfort Common<br>words, perhaps ,                                                   | When they two had their meeting<br>after death                                |
| The ministers in church might say<br>the same ,                                                      |                                                                               |
| But <del>he</del> , he made the church with what<br>he spoke,—                                       |                                                                               |

## FOURTH BOOK

THEY met still sooner 'Twas a year  
 from thence  
 That Lucy Gresham, the sick semp-  
 stress girl,  
 Who sewed by Marian's chair so still  
 and quick,  
 And leant her head upon the back to  
 cough  
 More freely when, the mistress turn-  
 ing round  
 The others took occasion to laugh  
 out,—  
 Gave up at last Among the workers,  
 spoke  
 A bold girl with black eyebrows and  
 red lips,—  
 "You know the news? Who's dying,  
 do you think?  
 Our Lucy Gresham I expected it  
 As little as Nell Hart's wedding  
 Blush not, Neil,  
 Thy curls be red enough without thy  
 cheeks,  
 And, some day there'll be found a  
 man to dote  
 On red curls—Lucy Gresham swooned  
 last night  
 Dropped sudden in the street while  
 going home,  
 And now the baker says, who took her  
 up  
 And laid her by her grandmother in  
 bed,  
 He'll give her a week to die in Pass  
 the silk  
 Let's hope he gave her a loaf too,  
 within reach  
 For otherwise they'll starve before  
 they die  
 That funny pair of bedfellows! Miss  
 Bell,  
 I'll thank you for the scissors The  
 old crone  
 Is paralytic—that's the reason why  
 Our Lucy's thread went faster than  
 her breath,  
 Which went too quick, we all know  
 Marian Erle!  
 Why, Marian Erle, you're not the  
 fool to cry?  
 Your tears spoil Lady Waldemar's  
 new dress,  
 You piece of pity!"  
 Marian rose up straight,

And, breaking through the talk and  
 through the work,  
 Went outward, in the face of their  
 surprise,  
 To Lucy's home, to nurse her back to  
 life  
 Or down to death She knew, by such  
 an act  
 All place and grace were forfeit in the  
 house,  
 Whose mistress would supply the  
 missing hand  
 With necessary, not inhuman haste,  
 And take no blame But pity, too,  
 had dues  
 She could not leave a solitary soul  
 To founder in the dark, while she  
 sate still  
 And lavished stitches on a lady's hem  
 As if no other work were paramount  
 "Why, God," thought Marian, "has  
 a missing hand  
 This moment, Lucy wants a drink,  
 perhaps  
 Let others miss me! never miss me,  
 God!"  
 So Marian sate by Lucy's bed, content  
 With duty, and was strong, for recom-  
 pense,  
 To hold the lamp of human love arm-  
 high  
 To catch the death-strained eyes and  
 comfort them  
 Until the angels, on the luminous side  
 Of death, had got theirs ready And  
 she said,  
 If Lucy thanked her sometimes,  
 called her kind  
 It touched her strangely "Marian  
 Erle called kind!"  
 What, Marian, beaten and sold who  
 could not die!  
 'Tis verily good fortune to be kind  
 Ah, you," she said "who are born to  
 such a grace,  
 Be sorry for the unlicensed class, the  
 poor,  
 Reduced to think the best good for-  
 tune means  
 That others, simply, should be kind to  
 them"  
 From sleep to sleep while Lucy slid  
 away  
 So gently, like the light upon a hill,

Of which none names the moment  
 that it goes  
 Though all see when 'tis gone,—a  
 man came in  
 And stood beside the bed The old  
 idiot wretch  
 Screamed feebly, like a baby over-  
 lain,  
 "Sir, sir, you won't mistake me for  
 the corpse ?  
 Don't look at *me*, sir ! never bury *me* !  
 Although I lie here, I'm alive as you,  
 Except my legs and arms,—I eat and  
 drink,  
 And understand—(that you're the  
 gentleman  
 Who fits the funerals up Heaven  
 speed you, sir,)  
 And certainly I should be livelier still  
 If Lucy here sir, Lucy is the  
 corpse  
 Had worked more properly to buy me  
 wine  
 But Lucy, sir, was always slow at  
 work,  
 I shan't lose much by Lucy Marian  
 Erle,  
 Speak up and show the gentleman  
 the corpse "

And then a voice said, "Marian Erle"  
 She rose,  
 It was the hour for angels—there,  
 stood hers !  
 She scarcely marvelled to see Rom-  
 ney Leigh  
 As light November snows to empty  
 nests,  
 As grass to graves, as moss to mil-  
 dewed stones,  
 As July suns to ruins, through the  
 rents,  
 As ministering spirits to mourners,  
 through a loss,  
 As Heaven itself to men, through  
 pangs of death,  
 He came uncalled wherever grief had  
 come  
 "And so," said Marian Erle, "we  
 met anew,"  
 And added softly, "so, we shall not  
 part "

He was not angry that she had left  
 the house  
 Wherein he placed her Well—she  
 had feared it might

Have vexed him Also, when he  
 found her set  
 On keeping though the dead was out  
 of sight,  
 That half-dead, half-live body left  
 behind  
 With cankerous heart and flesh,—  
 which took your best  
 And cursed you for the little good it  
 did  
 (Could any leave the bedrid wretch  
 alone,  
 So joyless, she was thankless even to  
 God,  
 Much less to you ?) he did not say  
 'twas well,  
 Yet Marian thought he did not take it  
 ill  
 Since day by day he came, and, every  
 day,  
 She felt within his utterance and his  
 eyes  
 A closer, tenderer presence of the  
 soul,  
 Until at last he said, "We shall not  
 part "

On that same day, was Marian's work  
 complete  
 She had smoothed the empty bed,  
 and swept the floor  
 Of coffin sawdust, set the chairs anew  
 The dead had ended gossip in, and  
 stood  
 In that poor room so cold and orderly,  
 The door-key in her hand, prepared  
 to go  
 As *they* had, howbeit not their way  
 He spoke

"Dear Marian, of one clay God made  
 us all,  
 And though men push and poke and  
 paddle in't  
 (As children play at fashioning dirt-  
 pies)  
 And call their fancies by the name of  
 facts,  
 Assuming difference, lordship, privi-  
 lege,  
 When all's plain dirt,—they come  
 back to it at last,  
 The first grave-digger proves it with  
 a spade,  
 And pats all even Need we wait for  
 this,

You, Marian, and I, Romney ? ”  
 She, at that,  
 Looked blindly in his face, as when  
 one looks  
 Through driving autumn-rains to  
 find the sky  
 He went on speaking  
 “Marian, I being born  
 What men call noble, and you, issued  
 from  
 The noble people,—though the tyrannous sword  
 Which pierced Christ’s heart, has  
 cleft the world in twain  
 ’Twixt class and class, opposing rich  
 to poor,—  
 Shall *we* keep parted ? Not so Let  
 us lean  
 And strain together rather, each to  
 each,  
 Compress the red lips of this gaping  
 wound,  
 As far as two souls can,—ay, lean and  
 league,  
 I, from my superabundance,—from  
 your want,  
 You,—joining in a protest ’gainst the  
 wrong  
 On both sides ! ”—  
 All the rest, he held her hand  
 In speaking, which confused the  
 sense of much,  
 Her heart, against his words, beat out  
 so thick,  
 They might as well be written on the  
 dust  
 Where some poor bird, escaping from  
 hawk’s beak,  
 Has dropped, and beats its shuddering  
 wings,—the lines  
 Are rubbed so,—yet ’twas something  
 like to this,  
 —“ That they two, standing at the  
 two extremes  
 Of social classes, had received one  
 seal,  
 Been dedicate and drawn beyond  
 themselves  
 To mercy and ministration,—he, indeed,  
 Through what he knew, and she,  
 through what she felt,  
 He, by man’s conscience, she, by  
 woman’s heart,  
 Relinquishing their several ’vantage  
 posts

Of wealthy ease and honourable  
toil,  
To work with God at love And,  
since God willed  
That, putting out his hand to touch  
this ark,  
He found a woman's hand there, he'd  
accept  
The sign too, hold the tender fingers  
fast,  
And say, ' My fellow-worker, be my  
wife ! ' "

She told the tale with simple, rustic  
turns,—  
Strong leaps of meaning in her sud-  
den eyes  
That took the gaps of any imperfect  
phrase  
Of the unschooled speaker I have  
rather writ  
The thing I understood so, than the  
thing  
I heard so And I cannot render  
right  
Her quick gesticulation, wild yet soft,  
Self-startled from the habitual mood  
she used,  
Half sad, half languid,—like dumb  
creatures (now  
A rustling bird, and now a wandering  
deer,  
Or squirrel against the oak-gloom  
flashing up  
His sidelong burnished head, in just  
her way  
Of savage spontaneity) that stir  
Abruptly the green silence of the  
woods,  
And make it stranger, holier, more  
profound,  
As Nature's general heart confessed  
itself  
Of life, and then fell backward on  
repose

I kissed the lips that ended —" So  
indeed  
He loves you, Marian ? "  
" Loves me ! " She looked up  
With a child's wonder when you ask  
him first  
Who made the sun—a puzzled blush,  
that grew,  
Then broke off in a rapid radiant  
smile

Of sure solution "Loves me" he  
loves all,—  
And me, of course He had not asked  
me else  
To work with him for ever, and be his  
wife "

Her words reproved me This per-  
haps was love—

To have its hands too full of gifts to  
give,

For putting out a hand to take a gift,  
To love so much, the perfect round of  
love

Includes, in strict conclusion, the be-  
ing loved,

As Eden-dew went up and fell again,  
Enough for watering Eden Obvi-  
ously

She had not thought about his love at  
all

The cataracts of her soul had poured  
themselves,

And risen self-crowned in rainbow  
would she ask

Who crowned her?—it sufficed that  
she was crowned

With women of my class, 'tis other-  
wise

We haggle for the small change of our  
gold,

And so much love, accord, for so  
much love,

Rialto-prices Are we therefore  
wrong?

If marriage be a contract, look to it  
then,

Contracting parties should be equal,  
just,

But if, a simple fealty on one side,  
A mere religion,—right to give is all,

And certain brides of Europe duly ask  
To mount the pile, as Indian widows  
do,

The spices of their tender youth  
heaped up,

The jewels of their gracious virtues  
worn,

More gems, more glory,—to consume  
entire

For a living husband! as the man's  
alive,

Not dead,—the woman's duty, by so  
much,

Advanced in England, beyond Hin-  
dostan

I sate there, musing, till she touched  
my hand

With hers, as softly as a strange white  
bird

She feared to startle in touching,  
"You are kind

But are you, peradventure, vexed at  
heart

Because your cousin takes me for a  
wife?

I know I am not worthy—nay, in  
truth,

I'm glad on't, since, for that, he  
chooses me

He likes the poor things of the world  
the best

I would not therefore if I could be  
rich

It pleasures him to stoop for butter-  
cups,

I would not be a rose upon the wall  
A queen might stop at, near the  
palace-door,

To say to a courtier, 'Pluck that rose  
for me,

'It's prettier than the rest' O  
Romney Leigh!

I'd rather far be trodden by his foot,  
Than lie in a great queen's bosom "

Out of breath

She paused  
"Sweet Marian, do you disavow  
The roses with that face?"

She dropt her head,  
As if the wind had caught that flower  
of her,

And bent it in the garden,—then  
looked up

With grave assurance "Well, you  
think me bold!

But so we all are, when we're praying  
God

And if I'm bold—yet, lady, credit me,  
That, since I know myself for what I  
am,

Much fitter for his handmaid than  
his wife,

I'll prove the handmaid and the wife  
at once,

Serve tenderly, and love obediently,  
And be a worthier mate, perhaps  
than some

Who are wooed in silk among their  
learned books,

While I shall set myself to read his  
eyes,

Till such grow plainer to me than the  
 French  
 To wisest ladies Do you think I'll  
 miss  
 A letter, in the spelling of his mind ?  
 No more than they do, when they sit  
 and write  
 Their flying words with flickering  
 wildfowl tails  
 Nor ever pause to ask how many t's,  
 Should that be y or z—they know't so  
 well  
 I've seen them writing, when I  
 brought a dress  
 And waited,—floating out their soft  
 white hands  
 On shining paper But they're hard  
 sometimes,  
 For all those hands !—we've used out  
 many nights  
 And worn the yellow daylight into  
 shreds  
 Which flapped and shivered down  
 our aching eyes  
 Till night appeared more tolerable,  
 just  
 That pretty ladies might look beau-  
 tiful  
 Who said at last ' You're lazy  
 in that house !  
 ' You're slow in sending home the  
 work—I count  
 ' I've waited near an hour for't '  
 Pardon me,—  
 I do not blame them, madam, nor  
 misprize,  
 They are fair and gracious, ay, but  
 not like you,  
 Since none but you has Mister Leigh's  
 own blood  
 Both noble and gentle—and, with-  
 out it well  
 They are fair, I said, so fair, it  
 scarce seems strange  
 That, flashing out in any looking-  
 glass  
 The wonder of their glorious brows  
 and breasts,  
 They are charmed so, they forget to  
 look behind  
 And mark how pale we've grown,  
 we pitiful  
 Reminders of the world And so,  
 perhaps,  
 If Mister Leigh had chosen a wife  
 from these,

She might although he's better  
 than her best,  
 And dearly she would know it  
 steal a thought  
 Which should be all his, an eye-  
 glance from his face,  
 To plunge into the mirror opposite,  
 In search of her own beauty's pearl  
 while I  
 Ah, dearest lady, serge will out-  
 weigh silk  
 For winter-wear, when bodies feel  
 a-cold,  
 And I'll be a true wife to your cousin  
 Leigh "

Before I answered, he was there him-  
 self  
 I think he had been standing in the  
 room,  
 And listened probably to half her  
 talk,  
 Arrested, turned to stone—as white  
 as stone  
 Will tender sayings make men look  
 so white ?  
 He loves her then profoundly  
 " You are here,  
 Aurora ? Here I meet you !"—We  
 clasped hands

" Even so, dear Romney Lady  
 Waldemar  
 Has sent me in haste to find a cousin  
 of mine  
 Who shall be "

" Lady Waldemar is good "

" Here's one, at least who is good "  
 I sighed and touched  
 Poor Marian's happy head, as, dog-  
 like, she  
 Most passionately patient, waited on,  
 A-tremble for her turn of greeting  
 words,  
 " I've sate a full hour with your  
 Marian Erle,  
 And learnt the thing by heart,—  
 and, from my heart,  
 Am therefore competent to give you  
 thanks  
 For such a cousin "  
 " You accept at last  
 A gift from me, Aurora, without  
 scorn ?



At last I please you ?"—How his  
voice was changed !  
" You cannot please a woman  
against her will  
And once you vexed me Shall we  
speak of that ?  
We'll say, then, you were noble in it  
all,  
And I not ignorant—let it pass  
And now,  
You please me, Romney, when you  
please yourself,  
So, please you be fanatical in love  
And I'm well pleased Ah, cousin !  
at the old hall,  
Among the gallery portraits of our  
Leighs,  
We shall not find a sweeter signory  
Than this pure forehead's "  
Not a word he said  
How arrogant men are !—Even phil-  
anthropists,  
Who try to take a wife up in the way  
They put down a subscription-  
cheque,—if once  
She turns and says, " I will not tax  
you so,  
Most charitable sir,"—feel ill at ease,  
As though she had wronged them  
somehow I suppose  
We women should remember what  
we are,  
And not throw back an obolus in-  
scribed  
With Cæsar's image, lightly I re-  
sumed  
" It strikes me, some of those sub-  
lime Vandykes  
Were not too proud, to make good  
saints in heaven,  
And, if so, then they're not too proud  
to-day  
To bow down (now the ruffs are off  
their necks)  
And own this good, true, noble  
Marian yours  
And mine I'll say !—For poets (bear  
the word)  
Half-poets even are still whole  
democrats,—  
Oh, not that we're disloyal to the high,  
But loyal to the low, and cognisant  
Of the less scrutable majesties For  
me,  
I comprehend your choice—I justify

Your right in choosing "  
" No, no no," he sighed,  
With a sort of melancholy impa-  
tient scorn,  
As some grown man, who never had  
a child,  
Puts by some child who plays at be-  
ing a man,  
—" You did not, do not, cannot  
comprehend  
My choice, my ends my motives,  
nor myself  
No matter now—we'll let it pass,  
you say  
I thank you for your generous coun-  
sinship  
Which helps this present, I accept  
for her  
Your favourable thoughts We're  
fallen on days,  
We two who are not poets, when to  
wed  
Requires less mutual love than com-  
mon love  
For two together to bear out at once  
Upon the loveless many Work  
in pairs,  
In galley-couplings or in marriage-  
rings,  
The difference lies in the honour not  
the work,—  
And such we're bound to, I and she  
But love  
(You poets are benighted in this age '  
The hour's too late for catching even  
moths,  
You've gnats instead,) love !—  
love's fool-paradise  
Is out of date, like Adam's Set a  
swan  
To swim the Trenton, rather than  
true love  
To float its fabulous plumage safely  
down  
The cataracts of this loud transition-  
time,—  
Whose roar, for ever, henceforth, in  
my ears,  
Must keep me deaf to music "  
There, I turned  
And kissed poor Marian, out of dis-  
content  
The man had baffled, chafed me, till  
I flung  
For refuge to the woman,—as, some  
times,

Impatient of some crowded room's  
close smell,  
You throw a window open, and lean  
out  
To breathe a long breath in the dewy  
night,  
And cool your angry forehead She,  
at least,  
Was not built up, as walls are, brick  
by brick,  
Each fancy squared, each feeling  
ranged by line,  
The very heat of burning youth  
applied  
To indurate forms and systems !  
excellent bricks,  
A well-built wall,—which stops you  
on the road,  
An l, into which, you cannot see an  
inch  
Although you beat your head against  
it—pshaw !

“ Adieu ” I said “ for this time,  
cousins both ,  
And, cousin Romney, pardon me the  
word,  
Be happy!—oh, in some esoteric sense  
Of course !—I mean no harm in  
wishing well  
Adieu, my Marian —may she come  
to me,  
Dear Romney, and be married from  
my house ?  
It is not part of your philosophy  
To keep your bird upon the black-  
thorn ? ”

“ Ay ”  
He answered, “ but it is —I take  
my wife  
Directly from the people,—and she  
comes  
As Austria's daughter to imperial  
France,  
Betwixt her eagles, blinking not her  
race,  
From Margaret's Court at garret-  
height to meet  
And wed me at St James's, nor put  
off  
Her gown of serge for that The  
things we do  
We do we'll wear no mask, as if we  
blushed ”  
“ Dear Romney, you're the poet,” I  
replied,—

But felt my smile too mournful for  
my word,  
And turned and went Ay, masks,  
I thought,—beware  
Of tragic masks, we tie before the  
glass,  
Uplifted on the cothurn half a yard  
Above the natural stature ! we would  
play  
Heroic parts to ourselves,—and end,  
perhaps  
As impotently as Athenian wives  
Who shrieked in fits at the  
Eumenides  
His foot pursued me down the stair.  
“ At least,  
You'll suffer me to walk with you be-  
yond  
These hideous streets, these graves,  
where men alive  
Packed close with earthworms, burr  
unconsciously  
About the plague that slew them ,  
let me go  
The very women pelt their souls in  
mud  
At any woman who walks here  
alone  
How came you here alone ?—you  
are ignorant ”  
We had a strange and melancholy  
walk  
The night came drizzling downward  
in dark rain ,  
And, as we walked, the colour of the  
time,  
The act, the presence, my hand  
upon his arm,  
His voice in my ear, and mine to my  
own sense,  
Appeared unnatural We talked  
modern books  
And daily papers , Spanish Marriage-  
schemes,  
And English climate—was't so cold  
last year ?  
And will the wind change by to-  
morrow morn ?  
Can Guizot stand ? is London full ?  
is trade  
Competitive ? has Dickens turned  
his hinge  
A pinch upon the fingers of the  
great ?  
And are potatoes to grow mythical

|                                                                            |                                                                        |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Like moly ? will the apple die out too ?                                   | Beside a deathbed, where the morrow's sun                              |
| Which way is the wind to-night ? south east ? due east ?                   | Is sure to come too late for more good-days —                          |
| We talked on fast, while every common word                                 | And all that night I thought "Good-night," said he                     |
| Seemed tangled with the thunder at one end,                                | And so, a month passed Let me set it down                              |
| And ready to pull down upon our heads                                      | At once — I have been wrong, I have been wrong                         |
| A terror out of sight And yet to pause                                     | We are wrong always, when we think too much                            |
| Were surelier mortal we tore greedily up                                   | Of what we think or are, albeit our thoughts                           |
| All silence all the innocent breathing-points                              | Be verily bitter as self-sacrifice,                                    |
| As if, like pale conspirators in haste                                     | We're no less selfish If we sleep on rocks                             |
| We tore up papers where our signatures                                     | Or roses, sleeping past the hour of noon                               |
| Imperilled us to an ugly shame or death                                    | We're lazy This I write against myself                                 |
| I cannot tell you why it was 'Tis plain                                    | I had done a duty in the visit paid To Marian, and was ready otherwise |
| We had not loved nor hated wherefore dread                                 | To give the witness of my presence and name                            |
| To spill gunpowder on ground safe from fire ?                              | Whenever she should marry — Which, I thought,                          |
| Perhaps we had lived too closely, to diverge                               | Sufficed I even had cast into the scale                                |
| So absolutely leave two clocks, they say,                                  | An overweight of justice toward the match,                             |
| Wound up to different hours, upon one shelf,                               | The Lady Waldemar had missed her tool,                                 |
| And slowly, through the interior wheels of each                            | Had broken it in the lock as being too straight                        |
| The blind mechanic motion sets itself                                      | For a crooked purpose, while poor Marian Erle                          |
| A-throb to feel out for the mutual time                                    | Missed nothing in my accents or my acts                                |
| It was not so with us, indeed While he                                     | I had not been ungenerous on the whole,                                |
| Struck midnight, I kept striking six at dawn,                              | Nor yet untender, so, enough I felt                                    |
| While he marked judgment, I, redemption-day,                               | Tired, overworked this marriage somewhat jarred,                       |
| And such exception to a general law                                        | Or if it did not all the bridal noise                                  |
| Imperious upon inert matter even, Might make us, each to either, insecure, | The pricking of the map of life with pins                              |
| A beckoning mystery, or a troubling fear                                   | In schemes of "Here we'll go," and "There we'll stay,"                 |
| I mind me, when we parted at the door,                                     | And "Everywhere we'll prosper in our love,"                            |
| How strange his good-night sounded — like good-night                       | Was scarce my business Let them order it,                              |

Who else should care ? I threw  
myself aside  
As one who had done her work and  
shuts her eyes  
To rest the better

I, who should have known,  
Forereckoned mischief ! Where we  
disavow  
Being keeper to our brother, we're  
his Cain

I might have held that poor child to  
my heart

A little longer ! 'twould have hurt  
me much

To have hastened by its beats the  
marriage-day

And kept her safe meantime from  
tampering hands,

Or, peradventure, traps ? What  
drew me back

From telling Romney plainly, the  
designs

Of Lady Waldemar as spoken out  
To me me ? had I any right,

ay, right  
With womanly compassion and re-  
serve

To break the fall of woman's impu-  
dence ?—

To stand by calmly, knowing what I  
knew,

And hear him call her *good* ?  
Distrust that word

"There is none good save God,"  
said Jesus Christ

If He once, in the first creation-  
week,

Called creatures good,—for ever,  
afterward,

The Devil only has done it, and his  
heirs

The knaves who win so, and the  
fools who lose,

The word's grown dangerous In  
the middle age

I think they called malignant fays  
and imps

Good people A good neighbour,  
even in this

Is fatal sometimes, cuts your morn-  
ing up

To mince-meat of the very smallest  
talk,

Then helps to sugar her bohea at  
night

With your reputation I have  
known good wives,

As chaste or nearly so, as Poti-  
phar's,

And good, good mothers, who would  
use a child

To better an intrigue, good friends,  
beside

(Very good) who hung succinctly  
round your neck

And sucked your breath, as cats are  
fabled to do

By sleeping infants And we all  
have known

Good critics, who have stamped out  
poet's hopes,

Good statesmen, who pulled ruin on  
the state,

Good patriots, who, for a theory,  
risked a cause,

Good kings, who disembowelled for a  
tax,

Good Popes, who brought all good to  
jeopardy,

Good Christians who sate still in  
easy-chairs

And damned the general world for  
standing up —

Now, may the good God pardon all  
good men !

How bitterly I speak,—how certainly  
The innocent white milk in us is  
turned,

By much persistent shining of the  
sun !—

Shake up the sweetest in us long  
enough

With men, it drops to foolish curd,  
too sour

To feed the most untender of Christ's  
lambs

I should have thought a  
woman of the world

Like her I'm meaning—centre to  
herself

Who has wheeled on her own pivot  
half a life

In isolated self-love and self-will  
As a windmill seen at distance radi-  
ating

Its delicate white vans against the  
sky,

So soft and soundless, simply beau-  
tiful —

|                                      |                 |                                         |
|--------------------------------------|-----------------|-----------------------------------------|
| Seen nearer                          | what a roar and | A finished generation, dead of plague,  |
| tear it makes                        |                 | Swept outward from their graves         |
| How it grinds and bruises !          | if              | into the sun,                           |
| she loves at last,                   |                 | The moil of death upon them             |
| Her love's a re-adjustment of self-  |                 | a sight !                               |
| love,                                |                 | A holiday of miserable men              |
| No more, a need felt of another's    |                 | Is sadder than a burial-day of kings    |
| use                                  |                 |                                         |
| To her one advantage,—as the mill    |                 | They clogged the streets, they oozed    |
| wants grain                          |                 | into the church                         |
| The fire wants fuel, the very wolf   |                 | In a dark slowstream, like blood        |
| wants prey,                          |                 | To see that sight,                      |
| And none of these is more unscrupu-  |                 | The noble ladies stood up in their      |
| lous                                 |                 | pews,                                   |
| Than such a charming woman when      |                 | Some pale for fear, a few as red for    |
| she loves                            |                 | hate,                                   |
| She'll not be thwarted by an ob-     |                 | Some simply curious, some just inso-    |
| stacle                               |                 | lent,                                   |
| So trifling as her soul is           |                 | And some in wondering scorn,—           |
| much less yours !—                   |                 | “ What next ? what next ? ”             |
| Is God a consideration ?—she loves   |                 | These crushed their delicate rose-      |
| you,                                 |                 | lips from the smile                     |
| Not God, she will not flinch for     |                 | That misbecame them in a holy           |
| Him indeed                           |                 | place,                                  |
| She did not for the Marchioness of   |                 | With broidered hems of perfumed         |
| Perth,                               |                 | handkerchiefs,                          |
| When wanting tickets for the birth-  |                 | Those passed the salts with confi-      |
| night-ball                           |                 | dence of eyes                           |
| She loves you, sir, with passion, to |                 | And simultaneous shiver of <i>moiré</i> |
| lunacy,                              |                 | silk                                    |
| She loves you like her diamonds      |                 | While all the aisles, alive and black   |
| almost                               |                 | with heads,                             |
|                                      | Well,           | Crawled slowly toward the altar         |
| A month passed so, and then the      |                 | from the street,                        |
| notice came,                         |                 | As bruised snakes crawl and hiss out    |
| On such a day the marriage at the    |                 | of a hole                               |
| church                               |                 | With shuddering involutions, sway-      |
| I was not backward                   |                 | ing slow                                |
| Half Saint Giles in frieze           |                 | From right to left, and then from       |
| Was bidden to meet Saint James in    |                 | left to right,                          |
| cloth of gold                        |                 | In pants and pauses                     |
| And, after contract at the altar,    |                 | crest                                   |
| pass                                 |                 | Of faces, rose upon you everywhere,     |
| To eat a marriage-feast on Hamp-     |                 | From that crammed mass ! you did        |
| stead Heath                          |                 | not usually                             |
| Of course the people came in uncom-  |                 | See faces like them in the open day     |
| pelled,                              |                 | They hide in cellars, not to make you   |
| Lame, blind, and worse—sick, sor-    |                 | mad                                     |
| rowful and worse,                    |                 | As Romney Leigh is —Faces !—O           |
| The humours of the peccant social    |                 | my God,                                 |
| wound                                |                 | We call those, faces ? men's and        |
| All pressed out, poured out upon     |                 | women's ay,                             |
| Pimlico,                             |                 | And children's,—babies, hanging         |
| Exasperating the unaccustomed air    |                 | like a rag                              |
| With hideous interfusion you'd       |                 | Forgotten on their mother's neck,—      |
| suppose                              |                 | poor mouths,                            |

|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
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| <p>Wiped clean of mother's milk by<br/>         mother's blow,<br/>         Before they are taught her cursing<br/>         Faces! phew,<br/>         We'll call them vices festering to<br/>         despairs,<br/>         Or sorrows petrifying to vices not<br/>         A finger-touch of God left whole on<br/>         them,<br/>         All ruined, lost—the countenance<br/>         worn out<br/>         As the garments the will dissolute as<br/>         the acts<br/>         The passions loose and dragging in<br/>         the dirt<br/>         To trip the foot up at the first free<br/>         step!—<br/>         Those, faces! 'twas as if you had<br/>         stirred up hell<br/>         To heave its lowest dreg-fiends upper-<br/>         most<br/>         In fiery swirls of slime,—such<br/>         strangled fronts,<br/>         Such obdurate jaws were thrown up<br/>         constantly,<br/>         To twit you with your race, corrupt<br/>         your blood,<br/>         And grind to devilish colours all your<br/>         dreams<br/>         Henceforth though, haply, you<br/>         should drop asleep<br/>         By clink of silver waters, in a muse<br/>         On Raffael's mild "Madonna of the<br/>         Bird"</p> <p>I've waked and slept through many<br/>         nights and days<br/>         Since then,—but still that day will<br/>         catch my breath<br/>         Like a nightmare There are fatal<br/>         days, indeed,<br/>         In which the fibrous years have taken<br/>         root<br/>         So deeply, that they quiver to their<br/>         tops<br/>         Where'er you stir the dust of such a<br/>         day</p> <p>My cousin met me with his eyes and<br/>         hand,<br/>         And then, with just a word, that<br/>         "Marian Erle<br/>         Was coming with her bridesmaids<br/>         presently,"<br/>         Made haste to place me by the altar-<br/>         stair,</p> | <p>Where he and other noble gentlemen<br/>         And high-born ladies, waited for the<br/>         bride</p> <p>We waited It was early there was<br/>         time<br/>         For greeting, and the morning's com-<br/>         pliment,<br/>         And gradually a ripple of women's<br/>         talk<br/>         Arose and fell, and tossed about a<br/>         spray<br/>         Of English s's soft as a silent hush,<br/>         And, notwithstanding, quite as<br/>         audible<br/>         As louder phrases thrown out by the<br/>         men<br/>         —"Yes, really, if we've need to wait<br/>         in church,<br/>         We've need to talk there"—"She?<br/>         'Tis Lady Ayr,<br/>         In blue—not purple! that's the<br/>         dowager"<br/>         —"She looks as young"—"She<br/>         flirts as young, you mean!"<br/>         Why if you had seen her upon Thurs-<br/>         day night,<br/>         You'd call Miss Norris modest"—<br/>         "You again!"<br/>         I waltzed with you three hours back<br/>         Up at six,<br/>         Up still at ten scarce time to change<br/>         one's shoes<br/>         I feel as white and sulky as a ghost,<br/>         So pray don't speak to me Lord<br/>         Belcher"—"No,<br/>         I'll look at you instead, and it's<br/>         enough<br/>         While you have that face" "In<br/>         church, my lord! fie, fie!"<br/>         —"Adair, you stayed for the Divi-<br/>         sion?"—"Lost<br/>         By one" "The devil it is! I'm sorry<br/>         for't<br/>         And if I had not promised Mistress<br/>         Grove"<br/>         —"You might have kept your word<br/>         to Liverpool"<br/>         "Constituents must remember, after<br/>         all,<br/>         We're mortal"—"We remind them<br/>         of it"—"Hark,<br/>         The bride comes! Here she comes,<br/>         in a stream of milk!"<br/>         —"There? Dear, you are asleep<br/>         still, don't you know</p> |
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The five Miss Granvilles ? always  
dressed in white  
To show they're ready to be married "  
—" Lower !  
The aunt is at your elbow "—" Lady  
Maud,  
Did Lady Waldemar tell you she had  
seen  
This gurl of Leigh's ? " " No,—wait !  
'twas Mrs Brookes,  
Who told me Lady Waldemar told  
her—  
No, 'twasn't Mrs Brookes '—" She's  
pretty ? "—" Who ?  
Mrs Brookes ? Lady Waldemar ?"—  
" How hot !  
Pray is't the law to-day we're not to  
breathe ?  
You're treading on my shawl—I  
thank you, sir "  
—" They say the bride's a mere child,  
who can't read,  
But knows the things she shouldn't,  
with wide-awake  
Great eyes I'd go through fire to  
look at her "  
—" You do, I think "—" And Lady  
Waldemar  
(You see her, sitting close to Romney  
Leigh,  
How beautiful she looks, a little  
flushed !)  
Has taken up the girl, and organ-  
ised  
Leigh's folly Should I have come  
here, you suppose,  
Except she'd asked me ? "—" She'd  
have served him more  
By marrying him herself "  
" Ah—there she comes,  
The bride, at last ! "  
" Indeed, no Past eleven  
She puts off her patched petticoat to-  
day  
And puts on Mayfair manners, so  
begins  
By setting us to wait "—" Yes, yes,  
thus Leigh  
Was always odd, it's in the blood, I  
think  
His father's uncle's cousin's second  
son  
Was, was you understand me—  
and for him,  
He's stark !—has turned quite lunatic  
upon

This modern question of the poor—  
the poor  
An excellent subject when you're  
moderate  
You've seen Prince Albert's model  
lodging-house ?  
Does honour to his Royal Highness  
Good !  
But would he stop his carriage in  
Cheapside  
To shake a common fellow by the fist  
Whose name was Shakspeare ?  
no We draw a line,  
And if we stand not by our order we  
In England, we fall headlong Here's  
a sight,—  
A hideous sight, a most indecent  
sight !  
My wife would come, sir, or I had kept  
her back  
By heaven, sir, when poor Damien's  
trunk and limbs  
Were torn by horses, women of the  
Court  
Stood by and stared, exactly as to-  
day  
On this dismembering of society,  
With pretty troubled faces "  
" Now, at last  
She comes now "  
" Where ? who sees ? you  
push me, sir,  
Beyond the point of what is mannerly  
You're standing, madam, on my  
second flounce—  
I do beseech you "  
" No—it's not the bride  
Half-past eleven How late The  
bridegroom, mark  
Gets anxious and goes out  
" And as I said  
These Leighs ! our best blood running  
in the rut !  
It's something awful We had par-  
doned him  
A simple misalliance got up aside  
For a pair of sky-blue eyes, our  
House of Lords  
Has winked at such things, and we've  
all been young  
But here's an inter-marriage reasoned  
out,  
A contract (carried boldly to the light,  
To challenge observation, pioneer  
Good acts by a great example) 'twixt  
the extremes

Of martyrs'd society,—on the left,  
The well-born,—on the right, the  
merest mob,  
To treat as equals !—'tis anarchical !  
It means more than it says—'tis  
damnable !

Why, sir, we can't have even our  
coffee good,

Unless we strain it "

" Here, Miss Leigh ! "

" Lord Howe

You're Romney's friend What's all  
this waiting for ? "

" I cannot tell The bride has lost  
her head

(And way, perhaps ! ) to prove her  
sympathy

With the bridegroom "

" What,—you also, disapprove ! "

" Oh, *I* approve of nothing in the  
world,"

He answered, " not of you, still less  
of me,

Nor even of Romney—though he's  
worth us both

We're all gone wrong The tune in  
us is lost

And whistling in back alleys to the  
moon,

Will never catch it "

Let me draw Lord Howe,  
A born aristocrat, bred Radical,  
And educated Socialist, who still  
Goes floating, on traditions of his  
kind,

Across the theoretic flood from  
France,—

Though like a drenched Noah on a  
rotten deck,

Scarce safer for his place there He,  
at least,

Will never land on Ararat he knows  
To recommence the world on the old  
plan

Indeed, he thinks, said world had  
better end,

He sympathises rather with the fish  
Outside, than with the drowned  
paired beasts within

Who cannot couple again or multiply  
And that's the sort of Noah he is,  
Lord Howe

He never could be anything complete,

Except a loyal, upright gentleman,  
A liberal landlord, graceful diner-out,  
And entertainer more than hospitable,  
Whom authors dine with and forget  
the port

Whatever he believes, and it is much,  
But no-wise certain now here and  
now there

He still has sympathies beyond his  
creed,

Diverting him from action In the  
House,

No party counts upon him, and all  
praise,

All like his books too (he has written  
books)

Which, good to lie beside a bishop's  
chair,

So oft outreach themselves with jets  
of fire

At which the foremost of the progres-  
sists

May warm audacious hands in passing  
by

—Of stature over-tall, lounging for  
ease,

Light hair, that seems to carry a wind  
in it,

And eyes that, when they look on you,  
will lean

Their whole weight half in indolence,  
and half

In wishing you unmitigated good,  
Until you know not if to flinch from  
him

Or thank him —'Tis Lord Howe  
" We're all gone wrong,"

Said he, " and Romney, that dear  
friend of ours,

Is no-wise right There's one true  
thing on earth,

That's love ! He takes it up, and  
dresses it

And acts a play with it, as Hamlet did,  
To show what cruel uncles we have  
been,

And how we should be uneasy in our  
minds,

While he Prince Hamlet, weds a  
pretty maid

(Who keeps us too long waiting, we'll  
confess)

By symbol, to instruct us formally  
To fill the ditches up 'twixt class and  
class,

And live together in phalansteries



What then ?—he's mad, our Hamlet !  
clap his play,  
And bind him "

" Ah, Lord Howe, this spectacle  
Pulls stronger at us than the Dane's  
See there !

The crammed aisles heave and strain  
and steam with life—  
Dear Heaven, what life ! "

" Why, yes,—a poet sees,  
Which makes him different from a  
common man

I, too, see somewhat, though I cannot  
sing,

I should have been a poet, only that  
My mother took fright at the ugly  
world,

And bore me tongue-tied If you'll  
grant me now

That Romney gives us a fine actor-  
piece

To make us merry on his marriage-  
morn

The fables worse than Hamlet's, I'll  
concede

The terrible people, old and poor and  
blind,

Their eyes eat out with plague and  
poverty

From seeing beautiful and cheerful  
sights,

We'll liken to a brutalised King Lear  
Led out,—by no means to clear scores  
with wrongs—

His wrongs are so far back he  
has forgot,

All's past like youth, but just to wit-  
ness here

A simple contract,—he, upon his  
side,

And Regan with her sister Goneril  
And all the dappled courtiers and

• court-fools,  
On their side Not that any of these  
would say

They're sorry, neither What is done,  
is done,

And violence is now turned privilege,  
As cream turns cheese, if buried long  
enough

What could such lovely ladies have to  
do

With the old man there, in those ill-  
odorous iags,

Except to keep the wind-side of him ?  
Lear

Is flat and quiet, as a decent grave,  
He does not curse his daughters in the  
least

Be these his daughters ? Lear is  
thinking of

His porridge chiefly is it getting  
cold

At Hampstead ? will the ale be served  
in pots ?

Poor Lear, poor daughters ! Bravo,  
Romney's play ! "

A murmur and a movement drew  
around,

A naked whisper touched us Some-  
thing wrong !

What's wrong ? The black crowd, as  
an over-strained

Cord, quivered in vibrations, and I  
saw

Was that *his* face I saw ? his  
Romney Leigh's

Which tossed a sudden horror like a  
sponge

Into all eyes—while himself stood  
white upon

The topmost altar-stair, and tried to  
speak,

And failed, and lifted higher above his  
head

A letter as a man who drowns  
and gasps

" My brothers, bear with me ! I am  
very weak

I meant but only good Perhaps I  
meant

Too proudly,—and God snatched the  
circumstance

And changed it therefore There's  
no marriage—none

She leaves me,—she departs,—she  
disappears—

I lose her Yet I never forced her 'Ay,'  
To have her 'No' so cast into my  
teeth,

In manner of an accusation, thus  
My friends, you are all dismissed Go,  
eat and drink

According to the programme,—and,  
farewell ! "

He ended There was silence in the  
church,

We heard a baby sucking in its sleep  
At the farthest end of the aisle Then  
spoke a man,

" Now, look to it, coves, that all the  
beef and drink  
Be not filched from us like the other  
fun,  
For beer's spilt easier than a woman  
is !  
This gentry is not honest with the  
poor,  
They bring us up, to trick us "—" Go  
it, Jim,"  
A woman screamed back,— " I'm a  
tender soul,  
I never banged a child at two years  
old  
And drew blood from him, but I  
sobbed for it  
Next moment,—and I've had a  
plague of seven  
I'm tender, I've no stomach even for  
beef  
Until I know about the girl that's  
lost,  
That's killed, mayhap I did mis-  
doubt, at first  
The fine lord meant no good by her,  
or us  
He, maybe, got the upper hand of her  
By holding up a wedding-ring, and  
then  
A choking finger on her throat, last  
night,  
And just a clever tale to keep us still,  
As she is, poor lost innocent ' Dis-  
appear !'  
Who ever disappears except a ghost ?  
And who believes a story of a ghost ?  
I ask you,—would a girl go off, instead  
Of staying to be married ? a fine tale !  
A wicked man, I say, a wicked man !  
For my part I would rather starve on  
gin  
Than make my dinner on his beef and  
beer "—  
At which a cry rose up—" We'll have  
our rights  
We'll have the girl, the girl ! Your  
ladies there  
Are married safely and smoothly  
every day,  
And *she* shall not drop through into a  
trap  
Because she's poor and of the people  
shame !  
We'll have no tricks played off by  
gentlefolks,  
We'll see her righted "

Through the rage and roar  
I heard the broken words which Rom-  
ney flung  
Among the turbulent masses, from  
the ground  
He held still, with his masterful pale  
face—  
As huntsmen throw the ration to the  
pack  
Who, falling on it headlong, dog on  
dog  
In heaps of fury, rend it, swallow it  
up  
With yelling hound-jaws,—his indig-  
nant words  
His piteous words, his most pathetic  
words,  
Whereof I caught the meaning here  
and there  
By his gesture torn in morsels,  
yelled across,  
And so devoured From end to end,  
the church  
Rocked round us like the sea in storm,  
and then  
Broke up like the earth in earthquake.  
Men cried out  
" Police !"—and women stood and  
shrieked for God,  
Or dropt and swooned, or, like a herd  
of deer  
(For whom the black woods suddenly  
grow alive,  
Unleashing their wild shadows down  
the wind  
To hunt the creatures into corners,  
back  
And forward), madly fled, or blindly  
fell,  
Trode screeching underneath the feet  
of those  
Who fled and screeched  
The last sight left to me  
Was Romney's terrible calm face  
above  
The tumult !—the last sound was  
" Pull him down !"  
Strike—kill him ! " Stretching my  
unreasoning arms,  
As men in dreams who vainly inter-  
pose  
" Twixt gods and their undoing with a  
cry  
I struggled to precipitate myself  
Head-foremost to the rescue of my  
soul

|                                          |               |                                        |
|------------------------------------------|---------------|----------------------------------------|
| In that white face,                      | till some one | (Its sweetness comes the next to what  |
| caught me back,                          |               | you speak),                            |
| And so the world went out,—I felt no     | more          | But yesterday sobs took me by the      |
|                                          |               | throat,                                |
| What followed, was told after by         |               | And cut me off from music              |
| Lord Howe,                               |               | “ Mister Leigh,                        |
| Who bore me senseless from the           |               | You'll set me down as wrong in many    |
| strangling crowd                         |               | things                                 |
| In church and street, and then re-       |               | You've praised me, sir, for truth,—    |
| turned alone                             |               | and now you'll learn                   |
| To see the tumult quelled The men        |               | I had not courage to be rightly true   |
| of law                                   |               | I once began to tell you how she came, |
| Had fallen as thunder on a roaring       |               | The woman and you stared upon          |
| fire,                                    |               | the floor                              |
| And made all silent,—while the           |               | In one of your fixed thoughts          |
| people's smoke                           |               | which put me out                       |
| Passed eddying slowly from the           |               | For that day After, someone spoke      |
| emptied aisles                           |               | of me,                                 |
| Here's Marian's letter, which a ragged   |               | So wisely, and of you, so tenderly,    |
| child                                    |               | Persuading me to silence for your      |
| Brought running, just as Romney at       |               | sake                                   |
| the porch                                |               | Well, well! it seems this moment I was |
| Looked out expectant of the bride        |               | wrong                                  |
| He sent                                  |               | In keeping back from telling you the   |
| The letter to me by his friend Lord      |               | truth                                  |
| Howe                                     |               | There might be truth betwixt us two,   |
| Some two hours after folded in a         |               | at least,                              |
| sheet                                    |               | If nothing else And yet 'twas dan-     |
| On which his well-known hand had         |               | gerous                                 |
| left a word                              |               | Suppose a real angel came from         |
| Here's Marian's letter                   |               | heaven                                 |
| “ Noble friend, dear saint,              |               | To live with men and women! he'd go    |
| Be patient with me Never think me        |               | mad,                                   |
| vile,                                    |               | If no considerate hand should tie a    |
| Who might to-morrow morning be           |               | blind                                  |
| your wife                                |               | Across his piercing eyes 'Tis thus     |
| But that I loved you more than such      |               | with you                               |
| a name                                   |               | You see us too much in your heavenly   |
| Farewell, my Romney Let me               |               | light,                                 |
| write it once,—                          |               | I always thought so, angel,—and        |
| My Romney                                |               | indeed                                 |
| “ 'Tis so pretty a coupled word,         |               | There's danger that you beat yourself  |
| I have no heart to pluck it with a blot  |               | to death                               |
| We say 'my God' sometimes, upon          |               | Against the edges of this alien world, |
| our knees,                               |               | In some divine and fluttering pity     |
| Who is not therefore vexed so bear       |               | “ Yes,                                 |
| with it                                  |               | It would be dreadful for a friend of   |
| And me I know I'm foolish, weak,         |               | yours,                                 |
| and vain,                                |               | To see all England thrust you out of   |
| Yet most of all I'm angry with myself    |               | doors                                  |
| For losing your last footstep on the     |               | And mock you from the windows          |
| stair,                                   |               | You might say,                         |
| That last time of your coming,—          |               | Or think (that's worse), ' There's     |
| yesterday!                               |               | some one in the house                  |
| The very first time I lost step of yours |               | I miss and love still ' Dreadful!      |
|                                          |               | “ Very kind,                           |

|                                                                                                           |                                                                                      |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| I pray you mark, was Lady Walde-<br>mar                                                                   | And that's my choice, observe For<br>what remains,                                   |
| She came to see me nine times, rather<br>ten—                                                             | An over-generous friend will care for<br>me,                                         |
| So beautiful, she hurts me like the day<br>Let suddenly on sick eyes                                      | And keep me happy happier                                                            |
| “Most kind of all,<br>Your cousin!—ah, most like you!                                                     | This ink runs thick we light girls<br>lightly weep                                   |
| Ere you came                                                                                              | And keep me happier was the<br>thing to say,                                         |
| She kissed me mouth to mouth I felt<br>her soul                                                           | Than as your wife I could be!—O, my<br>star,                                         |
| Dip through her serious lips in holy<br>fire                                                              | My saint, my soul! for surely you're<br>my soul,                                     |
| God help me, but it made me arrogant,<br>I almost told her that you would not<br>lose                     | Through whom God touched me! I<br>am not so lost                                     |
| By taking me to wife though, ever<br>since,                                                               | I cannot thank you for the good you<br>did,                                          |
| I've pondered much a certain thing<br>she asked                                                           | The tears you stopped, which fell<br>down bitterly,                                  |
| 'He loves you, Marian?' in a<br>sort of mild                                                              | Like these—the times you made me<br>weep for joy                                     |
| Derisive sadness as a mother<br>asks                                                                      | At hoping I should learn to write your<br>notes                                      |
| Her babe 'You'll touch that star,<br>you think?'                                                          | And save the tiring of your eyes, at<br>night,                                       |
| “Farewell!                                                                                                | And most for that sweet thrice you<br>kissed my lips                                 |
| I know I never touched it                                                                                 | Saying 'Dear Marian'                                                                 |
| “This is worst                                                                                            | “'Twould be hard to read,                                                            |
| Babes grow, and lose the hope of<br>things above,                                                         | This letter, for a reader half as learn'd,                                           |
| A silver threepence sets them leaping<br>high—                                                            | But you'll be sure to master it, in<br>spite                                         |
| But no more stars! mark that                                                                              | Of ups and downs My hand shakes,<br>I am blind,                                      |
| “I've writ all night,                                                                                     | I'm poor at writing, at the best,—and<br>yet                                         |
| And told you nothing God, if I could<br>die,                                                              | I tried to make my g's the way you<br>showed                                         |
| And let this letter break off innocent<br>just here! But no—for your sake                                 | Farewell—Christ love you—Say<br>'poor Marian' now”                                   |
| “Here's the last,<br>I never could be happy as your wife,<br>I never could be harmless as your<br>friend, | Poor Marian!—wanton Marian!—<br>was it so,                                           |
| I never will look more into your face,<br>Till God says, 'Look!' I charge you,<br>seek me not,            | Or so? For days, her touching, foolish<br>lines                                      |
| Nor vex yourself with lamentable<br>thoughts                                                              | We mused on with conjectural fantasy,<br>As if some riddle of a summer-cloud         |
| That peradventure I have come to<br>grief,                                                                | On which one tries unlike similitudes<br>Of now a spotted Hydra-skin cast<br>off,    |
| Be sure I'm well, I'm merry, I'm at<br>ease,                                                              | And now a screen of carven ivory<br>That shuts the heavens' conventual<br>secrets up |
| But such a long way, long way long<br>way off,                                                            | From mortals over-bold We sought<br>the sense                                        |
| I think you'll find me sooner in my<br>grave,                                                             |                                                                                      |

She loved him so perhaps (such words  
 mean love,)

That, worked on by some shrewd per-  
 fidious tongue

(And then I thought of Lady Walde-  
 mar),

She left him, not to hurt him, or per-  
 haps

She loved one in her class, or did not  
 love,

But mused upon her wild bad tramp-  
 ing life,

Until the free blood fluttered at her  
 heart,

And black bread eaten by the road-  
 side hedge

Seemed sweeter than being put to  
 Romney's school

Of philanthropical self-sacrifice,  
 Irrevocably—Girls are girls beside,  
 Thought I, and like a wedding by one  
 rule

You seldom catch these birds, except  
 with chaff

They feel it almost an immoral thing  
 To go out and be married in broad  
 day,

Unless some winning special flattery  
 should

Excuse them to themselves for't,  
 "No one parts

Her hair with such a silver line as you,  
 One moonbeam from the forehead to  
 the crown!"

Or else "You bite your lip in such  
 a way,

It spoils me for the smiling of the  
 rest"—

And so on Then a worthless gaud or  
 two

To keep for love,—a ribbon for the  
 neck,

Or some glass pin,—they have their  
 weight with girls

And Romney sought her many days  
 and weeks

He sifted all the refuse of the town  
 Explored the trains, inquired among  
 the ships,

And felt the country through from  
 end to end,

No Marian!—Though I hunted what  
 I knew—

A friend of his had reasons of her  
 own

For throwing back the match—he  
 would not hear

The lady had been ailing ever since,  
 The shock had harmed her Some-  
 thing in his tone

Repressed me, something in me  
 shamed my doubt

To a sigh repressed too He went on  
 to say

That, putting questions where his  
 Marian lodged,

He found she had received for visitors,  
 Besides himself and Lady Waldemar

And, that once me—a dubious  
 woman dressed

Beyond us both The rings upon her  
 hands

Had dazed the children when she  
 threw them pence,

"She wore her bonnet as the queen  
 might hers

To show the crown," they said,—“a  
 scarlet crown

Of roses that had never been in bud”

When Romney told me that,—for  
 now and then

He came to tell me how the search  
 advanced,

His voice dropped I bent forward  
 for the rest

The woman had been with her, it  
 appeared,

At first from week to week, then day  
 by day,

And last 'twas sure

I looked upon the ground  
 To escape the anguish of his eyes, and  
 asked

As low as when you speak to mourners  
 new

Of those they cannot bear yet to call  
 dead,

"If Marian had as much as named to  
 him

A certain Rose, an early friend of hers,  
 A ruined creature”

"Never"—Starting up

He strode from side to side about the  
 room,

Most like some prisoned lion sprung  
 awake,

Who has felt the desert sting him  
 through his dreams

"What was I to her, that she should  
 tell me aught?”

A friend ' was I a friend ? I see all  
 clear  
 Such devils would pull angels out of  
 heaven  
 Provided they could reach them , it's  
 their pride ,  
 And that's the odds 'twixt soul and  
 body-plague !  
 The veriest slave who drops in Cairo's  
 street,  
 Cries, ' Stand off from me, ' to the pas-  
 sengers ,  
 While these blotched souls are eager  
 to infect,  
 And blow their bad breath in a sister's  
 face  
 As if they got some ease by it "

I broke through

" Some natures catch no plagues  
 I've read of babes  
 Found whole and sleeping by the  
 spotted breast  
 Of one a full day dead I hold it true  
 As I m a woman and know woman-  
 hood,  
 That Marian Erle, however lured from  
 place,  
 Deceived in way, keeps pure in aim  
 and heart,  
 As snow that's drifted from the garden-  
 bank  
 To the open road "

'Twas hard to hear him laugh

" The figure's happy Well—a dozen  
 carts  
 And trampers will secure you presently  
 A fine white snow-drift Leave it  
 there, your snow !  
 'Twill pass for soot ere sunset Pure  
 in aim ?  
 She's pure in aim, I grant you,—like  
 myself,  
 Who thought to take the world upon  
 my back  
 To carry it o'er a chasm of social ill,  
 And end by letting slip through im-  
 potence  
 A single soul, a child's weight in a soul,  
 Straight down the pit of hell ! yes, I  
 and she  
 Have reason to be proud of our pure  
 aims "

Then softly, as the last repenting  
 drops  
 Of a thunder-shower, he added, " The  
 poor child ,

Poor Marian ! 'twas a luckless day for  
 her,  
 When first she chanced on my philan-  
 thropy "

He drew a chair beside me, and sate  
 down ,  
 And I, instinctively, as women use  
 Before a sweet friend's grief,—when,  
 in his ear,  
 They hum the tune of comfort, though  
 themselves  
 Most ignorant of the special words of  
 such,  
 And quiet so and fortify his brain  
 And give it time and strength for  
 feeling out  
 To reach the availing sense beyond  
 that sound,—  
 Went murmuring to him, what, if  
 written here,  
 Would seem not much, yet fetched  
 him better help  
 Than, peradventure, if it had been  
 more

I've known the pregnant thinkers of  
 this time,  
 And stood by breathless, hanging on  
 their lips,  
 When some chromatic sequence of  
 fine thought  
 In learned modulation phrased itself  
 To an un conjectured harmony of  
 truth  
 And yet I've been more moved, more  
 raised, I say,  
 By a simple word a broken easy  
 thing,  
 A three-years' infant might say after  
 you —  
 A look, a sigh, a touch upon the palm,  
 Which meant less than " I love you "

\* than by all

The full-voiced rhetoric of those  
 master-mouths

" Ah, dear Aurora " he began at last,  
 His pale lips fumbling for a sort of  
 smile,  
 " Your printer's devils have not spoilt  
 your heart  
 That's well And who knows but  
 long years ago,  
 When you and I talked, you were  
 somewhat right

In being so peevish with me ? You, at  
 least  
 Have ruined no one through your  
 dreams ! Instead,  
 You've helped the facile youth to live  
 youth's day  
 With innocent distraction, still per-  
 haps  
 Suggestive of things better than your  
 rhymes  
 The little shepherd-maiden, eight  
 years old,  
 I've seen upon the mountains of Vau-  
 cluse,  
 Asleep i' the sun, her head upon her  
 knees,  
 The flocks all scattered,—is more  
 laudable  
 Than any sheep-dog trained imper-  
 fectly,  
 Who bites the kids through too much  
 zeal "

" I look  
 As if I had slept, then ? "

He was touched at once  
 By something in my face Indeed  
 'twas sure  
 That he and I,—despite a year or two  
 Of younger life on my side, and on his,  
 The heaping of the years' work on the  
 days,—  
 The three-hour speeches from the  
 member's seat,  
 The hot committees, in and out the  
 House,  
 The pamphlets, " Arguments," " Col-  
 lective Views "  
 Tossed out as straw before sick houses,  
 just  
 To show one's sick and so be trod to  
 dirt  
 And no more use—through this  
 world's underground  
 The burrowing, groping effort, whence  
 the arm  
 And heart come bleeding,—sure, that  
 he and I  
 Were, after all, unequally fatigued !  
 That he, in his developed manhood,  
 stood  
 A little sunburnt by the glare of life,  
 While I it seemed no sun had  
 shone on me,  
 So many seasons I had forgot my  
 Springs ;

My cheeks had pined and perished  
 from their orbs,  
 And all the youth-blood in them had  
 grown white  
 As dew on autumn cyclamens alone  
 My eyes and forehead answered for  
 my face  
 He said " Aurora, you are  
 changed—are ill ! "

" Not so, my cousin,—only not  
 asleep ! "

I answered, smiling gently " Let it  
 be  
 You scarcely found the poet of Vau-  
 cluse  
 As drowsy as the shepherds What is  
 art,  
 But life upon the larger scale, the  
 higher,  
 When, graduating up in a spiral line  
 Of still expanding and ascending  
 gyres,  
 It pushes toward the intense signifi-  
 cance  
 Of all things, hungry for the Infinite ?  
 Art's life,—and where we live, we  
 suffer and toil "

He seemed to sift me with his painful  
 eyes  
 " Alas ! you take it gravely, you  
 refuse  
 Your dreamland, right of common,  
 and green rest  
 You break the mythic turf where  
 danced the nymphs,  
 With crooked ploughs of actual life,—  
 let in  
 The axes to the legendary woods,  
 To pay the head-tax You are fallen  
 indeed  
 On evil days, you poets if yourselves  
 Can praise that art of yours no other-  
 wise,  
 And if you cannot better take  
 a trade  
 And be of use ! 'twere cheaper for  
 your youth "

" Of use ! " I softly echoed, " there's  
 the point  
 We sweep about for ever in argument,  
 Like swallows, which the exasperate,  
 dying year  
 Sets spinning in black circles, round  
 and round,

Preparing for far flights o'er unknown  
seas  
And we where tend we ? "  
" Where ? " he said, and sighed  
" The whole creation, from the hour  
we are born,  
Perplexes us with questions Not a  
stone  
But cries behind us, every weary step,  
' Where where ? ' I leave stones to  
reply to stones  
Enough for me and for my fleshly  
heart  
To hearken the invocations of my kind,  
When men catch hold upon my shud-  
dering nerves  
And shriek, ' What help ? what hope ?  
what bread i' the house,  
' What fire i' the frost ? ' There  
must be some response,  
Though mine fail utterly This so-  
cial Sphinx,  
Who sits between the sepulchres and  
stews,  
Makes mock and mow against the  
crystal heavens,  
And bullies God,—exacts a word at  
least  
From each man standing on the side  
of God  
However paying a sphinx-price for it  
We pay it also if we hold our peace,  
In pangs and pity Let me speak  
and die  
Alas ! you'll say, I speak and kill, in-  
stead "

I pressed in there, " The best men,  
doing their best,  
Know peradventure least of what  
they do  
Men usefulest i' the world, are simply  
used,  
The nail that holds the wood, must  
pierce it first,  
And He alone Who wields the  
hammer, sees  
The work advanced by the earliest  
blow Take heart "

" Ah if I could have taken yours ! "  
he said,  
" But that's past now " Then ris-  
ing " I will take  
At least your kindness and encourage-  
ment

I thank you Dear, be happy Sing  
your songs,  
If that's your way ! but sometimes  
slumber too,  
Nor tire too much with following, out  
of breath,  
The rhymes upon your mountains of  
Delight  
Reflect, if Art be, in truth, the higher  
life,  
You need the lower life to stand upon,  
In order to reach up into that higher,  
And none can stand a-tiptoe in the  
place  
He cannot stand in with two stable  
feet  
Remember then !—for Art's sake,  
hold your life "

We parted so I held him in respect  
I comprehended what he was in heart  
And sacrificial greatness Ay, but he  
Supposed me a thing too small to  
deign to know  
He blew me, plainly, from the crucible,  
As some intruding interrupting fly  
Not worth the pains of his analysis  
Absorbed on nobler subjects Hurt  
a fly !  
He would not for the world he's  
pitiful  
To flies even " Sing," says he, "and  
tease me still,  
If that's your way, poor insect "  
That's your way !

## FIFTH BOOK

AURORA LEIGH, be humble Shall I  
hope  
To speak my poems in mysterious  
tune  
With man and nature,—with the lava-  
lymph  
That trickles from successive galaxies  
Still drop by drop adown the finger  
of God,  
In still new worlds ?—with summer-  
days in this,  
That scarce dare breathe, they are so  
beautiful ?—  
With spring's delicious trouble in the  
ground  
Tormented by the quickened blood of  
roots,  
And softly pricked by golden crocus-  
sheaves



|                                                                                                                                   |                                                                                          |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| In token of the harvest-time of<br>flowers ?—                                                                                     | There it is,                                                                             |
| With winters and with autumns,—<br>and beyond,                                                                                    | We women are too apt to look to one,<br>Which proves a certain impotence in<br>art )     |
| With the human heart's large seasons,<br>—when it hopes                                                                           | We strain our natures at doing some-<br>thing great,                                     |
| And fears, joys, grieves, and loves ?—<br>with all that strain                                                                    | Far less because it's something great<br>to do                                           |
| Of sexual passion, which devours the<br>flesh                                                                                     | Than, haply, that we, so, commend<br>ourselves                                           |
| In a sacrament of souls ? with<br>mother's breasts,                                                                               | As being not small, and more appre-<br>ciable                                            |
| Which round the new-made crea-<br>tures hanging there,                                                                            | To some one friend We must have<br>mediators                                             |
| Throb luminous and harmonious like<br>pure spheres ?—                                                                             | Betwixt our highest conscience and<br>the judge,                                         |
| With multitudinous life, and finally<br>With the great out-goings of ecstatic<br>souls,                                           | Some sweet saint's blood must<br>quicken in our palms                                    |
| Who, in a rush of too long prisoned<br>flame,                                                                                     | Or all the life in heaven seems slow<br>and cold                                         |
| Their radiant faces upward, burn<br>away                                                                                          | Good only, being perceived as the end<br>of good,                                        |
| Thus dark of the body, issuing on a<br>world                                                                                      | And God alone pleased,—that's too<br>poor, we think,                                     |
| Beyond our mortal ?—can I speak<br>my verse                                                                                       | And not enough for us, by any means<br>Ay—Romney, I remember, told me<br>once            |
| So plainly in tune to these things and<br>the rest,                                                                               | We miss the abstract, when we com-<br>prehend !                                          |
| That men shall feel it catch them on<br>the quick                                                                                 | We miss it most when we aspire<br>and fail                                               |
| As having the same warrant over<br>them                                                                                           | Yet so, I will not —This vile woman's<br>way                                             |
| To hold and move them, if they will<br>or no,                                                                                     | Of trailing garments, shall not trip<br>me up                                            |
| Alike imperious as the primal rhythm<br>Of that theurgic nature ? I must fail,                                                    | I'll have no traffic with the personal<br>thought                                        |
| Who fail at the beginning to hold and<br>move                                                                                     | In art's pure temple Must I work<br>in vain,                                             |
| One man,—and he my cousin, and he<br>my friend,                                                                                   | Without the approbation of a man ?                                                       |
| And he born tender, made intelligent,<br>Inclined to ponder the precipitous<br>sides                                              | It cannot be, it shall not Fame<br>itself,                                               |
| Of difficult questions, yet, obtuse to<br>me,—                                                                                    | That approbation of the general race,<br>Presents a poor end (though the<br>arrow speed, |
| Of me, incunous ! likes me very well,<br>And wishes me a paradise of good,<br>Good looks, good means, and good<br>digestion !—ay, | Shot straight with vigorous finger to<br>the white),                                     |
| But otherwise evades me, puts me off<br>With kindness, with a tolerant gentle-<br>ness,—                                          | And the highest fame was never<br>reached except                                         |
| Too light a book for a grave man's<br>reading ! Go,                                                                               | By what was aimed above it Art<br>for art,                                               |
| Aurora Leigh be humble                                                                                                            | And good for God Himself, the essen-<br>tial Good !                                      |
|                                                                                                                                   | We'll keep our aims sublime, our eyes<br>erect,                                          |

Although our woman-hands should  
shake and fail,  
And if we fail But must we ?—  
Shall I fail ?

The Greeks said grandly in their  
tragic phrase,

"Let no one be called happy till his  
death"

To which I add,—Let no one till his  
death

Be called unhappy Measure not the  
work

Until the day's out and the labour  
done,

Then bring your gauges If the  
day's work's scant,

Why, call it scant, affect no com-  
promise,

And in that we have nobly striven at  
least,

Deal with us nobly, women though  
we be,

And honour us with truth, if not with  
praise

My ballads prospered, but the bal-  
lad's race

Is rapid for a poet who bears weights  
Of thought and golden image He  
can stand

Like Atlas, in the sonnet,—and sup-  
port

His own heavens pregnant with dy-  
nastic stars,

But then he must stand still, nor take  
a step

In that descriptive poem called "The  
Hills,"

The prospects were too far and in-  
distinct

'Tis true my critics said, "A fine  
view, that!"

The public scarcely cared to climb  
the book

For even the finest, and the public's  
right,

A tree's mere firewood, unless human-  
ised,

Which well the Greeks knew, when  
they stirred the bark

With close-pressed bosoms of sub-  
siding nymphs,

And made the forest-rivers garrulous  
With babble of gods For us, we are  
called to mark

A still more intimate humanity  
In this inferior nature,—or, ourselves,  
Must fall like dead leaves trodden  
underfoot

By veritable artists Earth, shut up  
By Adam, like a fakir in a box

Left too long buried, remained stiff  
and dry,

A mere dumb corpse, till Christ the  
Lord came down,

Unlocked the doors, forced open the  
blank eyes,

And used His kingly chrisms to  
straighten out

The leathery tongue turned back into  
the throat

Since when, she lives, remembers,  
palpitates

In every limb aspires in every breath,  
Embraces infinite relations Now,

We want no half-gods, Panomphæan  
Joves,

Fauns, Naiads, Tritons, Oreads and  
the rest,

To take possession of a senseless world  
To unnatural vampire-uses See the  
earth,

The body of our body, the green earth,  
Indubitably human, like this flesh

And these articulated veins through  
which

Our heart drives blood ! there's not a  
flower of spring

That dies ere June, but vaunts itself  
allied

By issue and symbol, by significance  
And correspondence, to that spirit-  
world

Outside the limits of our space and  
time,

Whereto we are bound Let poets  
give it voice

With human meanings, else they miss  
the thought,

And henceforth step down lower,  
stand confessed

Instructed poorly for interpreters,—  
Thrown out by an easy cowslip in the  
text

Even so my pastoral failed it was a  
book

Of surface-pictures—pretty, cold,  
and false

With literal transcript,—the worse  
done, I think,

|                                        |                   |                                         |
|----------------------------------------|-------------------|-----------------------------------------|
| For being not ill-done                 | Let me set        | An age of mere transition, meaning      |
| my mark                                |                   | nought,                                 |
| Against such doings, and do other-     |                   | Except that what succeeds must          |
| wise                                   |                   | shame it quite,                         |
| This strikes me —If the public whom    |                   | If God please That's wrong think-       |
| we know                                |                   | ing, to my mind,                        |
| Could catch me at such admissions, I   |                   | And wrong thoughts make poor            |
| should pass                            |                   | poems                                   |
| For being right modest                 | Yet how           | Every age,                              |
| proud we are,                          |                   | Through being beheld too close, is ill- |
| In daring to look down upon our-       |                   | discerned                               |
| selves !                               |                   | By those who have not lived past it     |
|                                        |                   | We'll suppose                           |
| The critics say that epics have died   |                   | Mount Athos carved, as Persian          |
| out                                    |                   | Xerxes schemed,                         |
| With Agamemnon and the goat-           |                   | To some colossal statue of a man        |
| nursed gods—                           |                   | The peasants, gathering brushwood       |
| I'll not believe it I could never      |                   | in his ear,                             |
| dream,                                 |                   | Had guessed as little of any human      |
| As Payne Knight did (the mythic        |                   | form                                    |
| mountaineer                            |                   | Up there, as would a flock of brows-    |
| Who travelled higher than he was       |                   | ing goats                               |
| born to live,                          |                   | They'd have, in fact, to travel ten     |
| And showed sometimes the goitre in     |                   | miles off                               |
| his throat                             |                   | Or ere the giant image broke on         |
| Discoursing of an image seen through   |                   | them,                                   |
| fog)                                   |                   | Full human profile, nose and chin dis-  |
| That Homer's heroes measured twelve    |                   | tinct,                                  |
| feet high                              |                   | Mouth muttering rhythms of silence      |
| They were but men !—his Helen's        |                   | up the sky                              |
| hair turned grey                       |                   | And fed at evening with the blood of    |
| Like any plain Miss Smith's, who       |                   | suns,                                   |
| wears a front,                         |                   | Grand torso,—hand, that flung per-      |
| And Hector's infant blubbered at a     |                   | petually                                |
| plume                                  |                   | The largesse of a silver river down     |
| As yours last Friday at a turkey-cock  |                   | To all the country pastures 'Tis        |
| All men are possible heroes every      |                   | even thus                               |
| age,                                   |                   | With times we live in,—evermore too     |
| Heroic in proportions, double-faced,   |                   | great                                   |
| Looks backward and before, expects     |                   | To be apprehended near                  |
| a morn                                 |                   | But poets should                        |
| And claims an epos                     |                   | Exert a double vision, should have      |
|                                        | Ay, but every age | eyes                                    |
| Appears to souls who live in it (ask   |                   | To see near things as comprehensively   |
| Carlyle)                               |                   | As if afar they took their point of     |
| Most unheroic Ours, for instance       |                   | sight,                                  |
| ours !                                 |                   | And distant things, as intimately deep, |
| The thinkers scout it, and the poets   |                   | As if they touched them Let us          |
| abound                                 |                   | strive for this                         |
| Who scorn to touch it with a finger-   |                   | I do distrust the poet who discerns     |
| tip                                    |                   | No character or glory in his times,     |
| A pewter age,—mixed metal, silver-     |                   | And trundles back his soul five hun-    |
| washed,                                |                   | dred years,                             |
| An age of scum, spooned off the richer |                   | Past moat and drawbridge, into a        |
| past,                                  |                   | castle-court,                           |
| An age of patches for old gaberdines,  |                   | Oh not to sing of lizards or of toads   |

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| <p>             Alive i' the ditch there !—'twere excusable,<br/>             But of some black chief, half knight,<br/>             half sheep-lifter,<br/>             Some beauteous dame, half chattel<br/>             and half queen,<br/>             As dead as must be, for the greater<br/>             part,<br/>             The poems made on their chivalric<br/>             bones<br/>             And that's no wonder death inherits<br/>             death<br/> <br/>             Nay if there's room for poets in this<br/>             world<br/>             A little overgrown (I think there is),<br/>             Their sole work is to represent the age,<br/>             Their age, not Charlemagne's,—this<br/>             live, throbbing age,<br/>             That brawls, cheats, maddens, calcu-<br/>             lates aspires,<br/>             And spends more passion, more heroic<br/>             heat<br/>             Betwixt the mirrors of its drawing-<br/>             rooms,<br/>             Than Roland with his knights, at<br/>             Roncesvalles<br/>             To flinch from modern varnish, coat<br/>             or flounce,<br/>             Cry out for togas and the picturesque,<br/>             Is fatal,—foolish too King Arthur's<br/>             self<br/>             Was commonplace to Lady Guenever,<br/>             And Camelot to minstrels seemed as<br/>             flat<br/>             As Regent Street to poets<br/> <br/>             Never flinch<br/>             But still, unscrupulously epic, catch<br/>             Upon the burning lava of a song,<br/>             The full-veined, heaving, double-<br/>             breasted Age<br/>             That, when the next shall come, the<br/>             men of that<br/>             May touch the impress with reverent<br/>             hand, and say<br/>             "Behold,—behold the paps we all<br/>             have sucked !<br/>             That bosom seems to beat still, or at<br/>             least —<br/>             It sets ours beating This is living<br/>             art,<br/>             Which thus presents, and thus re-<br/>             cords true life " <br/>             What form is best for poems ? Let<br/>             me think           </p> | <p>             Of forms less, and the external Trust<br/>             the spirit,<br/>             As sovran nature docs, to make the<br/>             form,<br/>             For otherwise we only imprison spirit,<br/>             And not embody Inward evermore<br/>             To outward,—so in life, and so in art,<br/>             Which still is life<br/> <br/>             Five acts to make a play.<br/>             And why not fifteen ? why not ten ?<br/>             or seven ?<br/>             What matter for the number of the<br/>             leaves,<br/>             Supposing the tree lives and grows ?<br/>             exact<br/>             The literal unities of time and place,<br/>             When 'tis the essence of passion to<br/>             ignore<br/>             Both time and place ? Absurd.<br/>             Keep up the fire,<br/>             And leave the generous flames to<br/>             shape themselves<br/> <br/>             'Tis true the stage requires obsequi-<br/>             ousness<br/>             To this or that convention, "exit"<br/>             here<br/>             And "enter" there, the points for<br/>             clapping, fixed,<br/>             Like Jacob's white-peeled rods before<br/>             the rams<br/>             And all the close-curved imagery<br/>             clipped<br/>             In manner of their fleece at shearing-<br/>             time<br/>             Forget to pick the galleries to the<br/>             heart<br/>             Precisely at the fourth act,—culmin-<br/>             ate<br/>             Our five pyramidal acts with one act<br/>             more,—<br/>             We're lost so ! Shakspeare's ghost<br/>             could scarcely plead<br/>             Against our just damnation Stand<br/>             aside,<br/>             We'll muse for comfort that, last<br/>             century<br/>             On this same tragic stage on which we<br/>             have failed,<br/>             A wigless Hamlet would have failed<br/>             the same<br/> <br/>             And whosoever writes good poetry,<br/>             Looks just to art He does not<br/>             write for you<br/>             Orme,—for London or for Edinburgh,           </p> |
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|------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------|
| He will not suffer the best critic known             | Of a modest phrase,—“ My gentle countrymen,       |
| To step into his sunshine of free thought            | There's something in it, haply, of your fault,”—  |
| And self-absorbed conception, and exact              | Why then, besides five hundred nobodies,          |
| An inch-long swerving of the holy lines              | He'll have five thousand, and five thousand more, |
| If virtue done for popularity                        | Against him,—the whole public,—all the hoofs      |
| Defiles like vice, can art for praise or hire        | Of King Saul's father's asses, in full drove,—    |
| Still keep its splendour, and remain pure art ?      | And obviously deserve it He appealed              |
| Eschew such serfdom What the poet writes,            | To these—and why say more if they condemn,        |
| He writes mankind accepts it, if it suits,           | Than if they praised him ?—Weep, my Æschylus      |
| And that's success if not, the poem's passed         | But low and far, upon Sicilian shores !           |
| From hand to hand, and yet from hand to hand,        | For since 'twas Athens (so I read the myth)       |
| Until the unborn snatch it, crying out               | Who gave communion to that fatal weight,          |
| In pity on their fathers' being so dull,             | The tortoise, cold and hard, to drop on thee      |
| And that's success too                               | And crush thee,—better cover thy bald head,       |
| I will write no plays                                | She'll hear the softest hum of Hyblan bee         |
| Because the drama, less sublime in this,             | Before thy loudest protestation Then              |
| Makes lower appeals, defends more menially,          | The risk's still worse upon the modern stage      |
| Adopts the standard of the public taste              | I could not, in so little, accept success,        |
| To chalk its height on, wears a dog-chain round      | Nor would I risk so much, in ease and calm,       |
| Its regal neck, and learns to carry and fetch        | For manifest gains, let those who prize,          |
| The fashions of the day to please the day,           | Pursue them I stand off                           |
| Fawns close on pit and boxes, who clap hands,        | And yet, forbid,                                  |
| Commending chiefly its docility                      | That any irreverent fancy or conceit              |
| And humour in stage-tricks, or else indeed           | Should litter in the Drama's throne-room where    |
| Gets hissed at, howled at, stamped at like a dog,    | The rulers of our heart, in whose full veins      |
| Or worse, we'll say For dogs, unjustly kicked,       | Dynastic glories mingle, sit in strength          |
| Yell, bite at need, but if your dramatist            | And do their kingly work,—conceive, command,      |
| (Being wronged by some five hundred nobodies         | And, from the imagination's crucial heat,         |
| Because their grosser brains most naturally          | Catch up their men and women all aflame           |
| Misjudge the fineness of his subtle wit)             | For action, all alive, and forced to prove        |
| Shows teeth an almond's breadth, protests the length | Their life by living out heart, brain, and nerve, |

Until mankind makes witness, "These  
     be men  
 As we are," and vouchsafes the kiss  
     that's due  
 To Imogen and Juliet—sweetest kin  
 On art's side  
 'Tis that, honouring to its worth  
 The drama, I would fear to keep it  
     down  
 To the level of the footlights Dies  
     no more  
 The sacrificial goat, for Bacchus  
     slain,—  
 His filmed eyes fluttered by the whirl-  
     ing white  
 Of choral vestures, troubled in his  
     blood,  
 While tragic voices that clanged  
     keen as swords,  
 Leapt high together with the altar-  
     flame,  
 And made the blue air wink The  
     waxen mask,  
 Which set the grand still front of  
     Themis' son  
 Upon the puckered visage of a  
     player,—  
 The buskin, which he rose upon and  
     moved,  
 As some tall ship first conscious of  
     the wind,  
 Sweeps slowly past the piers,—the  
     mouthpiece, where  
 The mere man's voice with all its  
     breaths and breaks  
 Went sheathed in brass, and clashed  
     on even heights  
 Its phrased thunders,—these things  
     are no more,  
 Which once were And concluding,  
     which is clear,  
 The growing drama has outgrown  
     such toys  
 Of simulated stature, face, and speech,  
 It also, peradventure, may outgrow  
 The simulation of the painted scene,  
 Boards, actors, prompters, gaslight,  
     and costume,  
 And take for a worthier stage the soul  
     itself,  
 Its shifting fancies and celestial lights,  
 With all its grand orchestral silences  
 To keep the pauses of the rhythmic  
     sounds  
 Alas, I still see something to be done,

And what I do falls short of what I see  
 Though I waste myself on doing  
     Long green days,  
 Worn bare of grass and sunshine,—  
     long calm nights,  
 From which the silken sleeps were  
     fretted out,—  
 Be witness for me with no amateur's  
 Irreverent haste and busy idleness  
 I've set myself to art! What then?  
     what's done?  
 What's done, at last?  
     Behold, at last, a book  
 If life-blood's necessary,—which it is,  
 (By that blue vein athrob on Maho-  
     met's brow,  
 Each prophet-poet's book must show  
     man's blood!)  
 If life-blood's fertilising, I wrung  
     mine  
 On every leaf of this,—unless the  
     drops  
 Slid heavily on one side and left it  
     dry  
 That chances often many a fervid  
     man  
 Writes books as cold and flat as grave-  
     yard stones  
 From which the lichen's scraped,  
     and if St Preux  
 Had written his own letters, as he  
     might,  
 We had never wept to think of the  
     little mole  
 'Neath Julie's drooping eyelid Pas-  
     sion is  
 But something suffered, after all  
     While Art  
 Sets action on the top of suffering  
 The artist's part is both to be and  
     do,  
 Transfixing with a special, central  
     power  
 The flat experience of the common  
     man,  
 And turning outward, with a sudden  
     wrench,  
 Half agony, half ecstasy, the thing  
 He feels the inmost never felt the  
     less  
 Because he sings it Does a torch  
     less burn  
 For burning next reflectors of blue  
     steel,  
 That *he* should be the colder for his  
     place

'Twixt two incessant fires,—his personal life's,  
 And that intense refraction which burns back  
 Perpetually against him from the round  
 Of crystal conscience he was born into  
 If artist-born? O sorrowful great gift  
 Conferred on poets, of a twofold life,  
 When one life has been found enough for pain!  
 We, staggering 'neath our burden as mere men,  
 Being called to stand up straight as demi-gods,  
 Support the intolerable strain and stress  
 Of the universal, and send clearly up  
 With voices broken by the human sob,  
 Our poems to find rhymes among the stars!  
  
 But soft!—a "poet" is a word soon said,  
 A book's a thing soon written Nay, indeed,  
 The more the poet shall be questionable  
 The more unquestionably comes his book!  
 And this of mine—well, granting to myself  
 Some passion in it, furrowing up the flats,  
 Mere passion will not prove a volume worth  
 Its gall and rags even Bubbles round a keel  
 Mean nought, excepting that the vessel moves  
 There's more than passion goes to make a man,  
 Or book, which is a man too  
  
 I am sad  
 I wonder if Pygmalion had these doubts,  
 And, feeling the hard marble first relent,  
 Grow supple to the straining of his arms,  
 And tingle through its cold to his burning lip,  
 Supposed his senses mocked, and that the toil

Of stretching past the known and seen, to reach  
 The archetypal Beauty out of sight,  
 Had made his heart beat fast enough for two,  
 And with his own life dazed and blinded him!  
 Not so, Pygmalion loved,—and whose loves  
 Believes the impossible  
  
 And I am sad  
 I cannot thoroughly love a work of mine,  
 Since none seems worthy of my thought and hope  
 More highly mated He has shot them down,  
 My Phœbus Apollo, soul within my soul,  
 Who judges, by the attempted, what's attained,  
 And with the silver arrow from his height,  
 Has struck down all my works before my face,  
 While I said nothing Is there aught to say?  
 I called the artist but a greatened man  
 He may be childless also, like a man  
  
 I laboured on alone The wind and dust  
 And sun of the world beat blistering in my face,  
 And hope, now for me, now against me, dragged  
 My spirits onward,—as some fallen balloon,  
 Which, whether caught by blossoming tree or bare,  
 Is torn alike I sometimes touched my aim,  
 Or seemed,—and generous souls cried out, "Be strong,  
 Take courage, now you're on our level,—now!"  
 The next step saves you!" I was flushed with praise,  
 But, pausing just a moment to draw breath,  
 I could not choose but murmur to myself  
 "Is this all? all that's done? and all that's gained?"  
 If this then be success, 'tis dismaller

|                                           |                                                |
|-------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------|
| Than any failure "                        | Our book and cry, " Ah you,                    |
| O my God, my God,                         | you care for rhymes ,                          |
| O supreme Artist, Who as sole return      | So here be rhymes to pore on under             |
| For all the cosmic wonder of Thy          | trees,                                         |
| work,                                     | When April comes to let you ! I've             |
| Demandest of us just a word a             | been told                                      |
| name                                      | They are not idle as so many are,              |
| " My Father ! "—Thou hast know-           | But set hearts beating pure as well as         |
| ledge, only Thou,                         | fast                                           |
| How dreary 'tis for women to sit still    | It's yours, the book I'll write your           |
| On winter nights by solitary fires,       | name in it,—                                   |
| And hear the nations praising them        | That so you may not lose, however              |
| far off,                                  | lost                                           |
| Too far ! ay, praising our quick sense    | In poet's lore and charming reverse,           |
| of love,                                  | The thought of how your father                 |
| Our very heart of passionate woman-       | thought of <i>you</i>                          |
| hood,                                     | In riding from the town "                      |
| Which could not beat so in the verse      | To have our books                              |
| without                                   | Appraised by love, associated with             |
| Being present also in the un-kissed lips, | love,                                          |
| And eyes undried because there's          | While <i>we</i> sit loveless ! is it hard, you |
| none to ask                               | think ?                                        |
| The reason they grew moist                | At least 'tis mournful Fame, indeed,           |
| To sit alone,                             | 'twas said,                                    |
| And think for comfort, how, that          | Means simply love It was a man                 |
| very night,                               | said that                                      |
| Affianced lovers, leaning face to face    | And then, there's love and love the            |
| With sweet half-listenings for each       | love of all                                    |
| other's breath,                           | (To risk, in turn, a woman's paradox,)         |
| Are reading haply from some page of       | Is but a small thing to the love of one        |
| ours,                                     | You bid a hungry child be satisfied            |
| To pause with a thrill, as if their       | With a heritage of many corn-fields            |
| cheeks had touched,                       | nay                                            |
| When such a stanza, level to their        | He says he's hungry,—he would                  |
| mood,                                     | rather have                                    |
| Seems floating their own thought out      | That little barley-cake you keep from          |
| —" So I feel                              | him                                            |
| For thee,"—" And I, for thee this         | While reckoning up his harvests So             |
| poet knows                                | with us ,                                      |
| What everlasting love is ! "—how,         | (Here, Romney, too, we fail to gener-          |
| that night,                               | alise !)                                       |
| A father issuing from the misty roads     | We're hungry                                   |
| Upon the luminous round of lamp           | Hungry ! but it's pitiful                      |
| and hearth                                | To wail like unweaned babes and suck           |
| And happy children, having caught         | our thumbs                                     |
| up first                                  | Because we're hungry Who, in all               |
| The youngest there until it shrunk        | this world                                     |
| and shrieked                              | (Wherein we are haply set to pray and          |
| To feel the cold chin prick its dimples   | fast,                                          |
| through                                   | And learn what good is by its oppo-            |
| With winter from the hills, may throw     | site)                                          |
| i' the lap                                | Has never hungered ? Woe to him                |
| Of the eldest (who has learnt to drop     | who has found                                  |
| her lids                                  | The meal enough ! if Ugolino's full,           |
| To hide some sweetness newer than         | His teeth have crunched some foul              |
| last year's)                              | unnatural thing                                |



For here satiety proves penury  
 More utterly irremediable And since  
 We needs must hunger,—better, for  
 man's love,  
 Than God's truth! better, for com-  
 panions sweet,  
 Than great convictions! let us bear  
 our weights,  
 Preferring dreary hearths to desert  
 souls  
 Well, well! they say we're envious  
 we who rhyme,  
 But I, because I am a woman perhaps  
 And so rhyme ill, am ill at envying  
 I never envied Graham his breadth of  
 style,  
 Which gives you, with a random  
 smutch or two  
 (Near-sighted critics analyse to  
 smutch),  
 Such delicate perspectives of full life,  
 Nor Belmore, for the unity of aim  
 To which he cuts his cedarn poems,  
 fine  
 As sketchers do their pencils, nor  
 Mark Gage,  
 For that caressing colour and tran-  
 cing tone  
 Whereby you're swept away and  
 melted in  
 The sensual element, which, with a  
 back wave,  
 Restores you to the level of pure souls  
 And leaves you with Plotinus None  
 of these,  
 For native gifts or popular applause,  
 I've envied, but for this,—that  
 when by chance  
 Says some one,—“There goes Bel-  
 more, a great man!”  
 He leaves clean work behind him, and  
 requires  
 No sweeper up of the chips,” a  
 girl I know,  
 Who answers nothing, save with her  
 brown eyes,  
 Smiles unaware, as if a guardian saint  
 Smiled in her—for this, too,—that  
 Gage comes home  
 And lays his last book's prodigal  
 review  
 Upon his mother's knees, where,  
 years ago  
 He had laid his childish spelling  
 book and learned

To chirp and peck the letters from  
 her mouth,  
 As young birds must “Well done,”  
 she murmured then  
 She will not say it now more wonder-  
 ingly,  
 And yet the last “Well done” will  
 touch him more,  
 As catching up to-day and yesterday  
 In a perfect chord of love, and so,  
 Mark Gage  
 I envy you your mother!—and you,  
 Graham,  
 Because you have a wife who loves  
 you so,  
 She half forgets, at moments, to be  
 proud  
 Of being Graham's wife, until a friend  
 observes,  
 “The boy here, has his father's  
 massive brow,  
 Done small in wax if we push  
 back the curls”  
 Who loves *me*? Dearest father,—  
 mother sweet—  
 I speak the names out sometimes by  
 myself,  
 And make the silence shiver they  
 sound strange,  
 As Hindostanee to an Ind-born  
 man  
 Accustomed many years to English  
 speech,  
 Or lovely poet-words grown obsolete,  
 Which will not leave off singing Up  
 in heaven  
 I have my father,—with my mother's  
 face  
 Beside him in a blotch of heavenly  
 light,  
 No more for earth's familiar, house-  
 hold use  
 No more! The best verse written  
 by this hand,  
 Can never reach them where they  
 sit, to seem  
 Well-done to *them* Death quite  
 unfellows us,  
 Sets dreadful odds betwixt the live  
 and dead,  
 And makes us part as those at  
 Babel did,  
 Through sudden ignorance of a  
 common tongue  
 A living Cæsar would not dare to play

At bowls, with such as my dead  
father is

And yet this may be less so than  
appears,

This change and separation Spar-  
rows five

For just two farthings, and God cares  
for each

If God is not too great for little  
cares,

Is any creature, because gone to God ?  
I've seen some men, voracious, no-  
wise mad,

Who have thought or dreamed, de-  
clared and testified,

They've heard the Dead a-ticking  
like a clock

Which strikes the hours of the  
eternities,

Beside them, with their natural ears,  
—and known

That human spirits feel the human  
way,

And hate the unreasoning awe which  
waves them off

From possible communion It may be

At least, earth separates as well as  
heaven

For instance, I have not seen Rom-  
ney Leigh

Full eighteen months add six,  
you get two years

They say he's very busy with good  
works,—

Has parted Leigh Hall into alms-  
houses

He made an almshouse of his heart  
one day

Which ever since is loose upon the  
latch

For those who pull the string—I  
never did

It always makes me sad to go abroad,  
And now I'm sadder that I went to-  
night

Among the lights and talkers at  
Lord Howe's

His wife is gracious, with her glossy  
braids,

And even voice, and gorgeous eye-  
balls, calm

As her other jewels If she's some-  
what cold,

Who wonders, when her blood has  
stood so long

In the ducal reservoir she calls her  
line

By no means arrogantly ? she's not  
proud,

Not prouder than the swan is of the  
lake

He has always swum in,—'tis her  
element,

And so she takes it with a natural  
grace

Ignoring tadpoles She just knows,  
perhaps,

There *are* men, move on without  
outriders,

Which isn't her fault Ah, to watch  
her face,

When good Lord Howe expounds  
his theories

Of social justice and equality—  
'Tis curious, what a tender, tolerant  
bend

Her neck takes for she loves him  
like his talk

"Such clever talk—that dear, odd  
Algernon!"

She listens on, exactly as if he talked  
Some Scandinavian myth of Lemures,  
Too pretty to dispute, and too absurd

She's gracious to me as her husband's  
friend,

And would be gracious, were I not a  
Leigh

Being used to smile just so, without  
her eyes

On Joseph Strangways, the Leeds  
mesmerist

And Delia Dobbs the lecturer from  
"the States"

Upon the "Woman's Question"  
Then, for him

I like him he's my friend And  
all the rooms

Were full of crinkling silks that  
swept about

The fine dust of most subtle courtesies.  
What then?—why then, we come  
home to be sad

How lovely One I love not, looked  
to-night!

She's very pretty, Lady Waldemar.  
Her maid must use both hands to  
twist that coil

Of tresses, then be careful lest the rich  
 Bronze rounds should slip—she  
 missed, though, a grey hair,  
 A single one,—I saw it, otherwise  
 The woman looked immortal How  
 they told,  
 Those alabaster shoulders and bare  
 breasts,  
 On which the pearls, drowned out of  
 sight in milk,  
 Were lost, excepting for the ruby-  
 clasp !  
 They split the amaranth velvet-  
 bodice down  
 To the waist, or nearly, with the  
 audacious press  
 Of full-breathed beauty If the  
 heart within  
 Were half as white !—but, if it were,  
 perhaps  
 The breast were closer covered, and  
 the sight  
 Less respectable, by half, too  
 I heard  
 The young man with the German  
 student's look—  
 A sharp face, like a knife in a cleft  
 stick,  
 Which shot up straight against the  
 parting line  
 So equally dividing the long hair,—  
 Say softly to his neighbour (thirty  
 five  
 And mediæval), "Look that way,  
 Sir Blaise  
 She's Lady Waldemar—to the left,—  
 in red—  
 Whom Romney Leigh, our ablest  
 man just now,  
 Is soon about to marry"  
 Then replied  
 Sir Blaise Delorme, with quiet, priest-  
 like voice,  
 Too used to syllable damnations  
 round  
 To make a natural emphasis worth  
 while  
 "Is Leigh your ablest man? the  
 same, I think,  
 Once jilted by a recreant pretty maid  
 Adopted from the people? Now, in  
 change,  
 He seems to have plucked a flower  
 from the other side  
 Of the social hedge"  
 "A flower, a flower," exclaimed

My German student,—his own eyes  
 full-blown  
 Bent on her He was twenty,  
 certainly  
 Sir Blaise resumed with gentle  
 arrogance  
 As if he had dropped his alms into a  
 hat  
 And had the right to counsel,—“My  
 young friend,  
 I doubt your ablest man's ability  
 To get the least good or help meet  
 for him,  
 For pagan phalanstery or Christian  
 home,  
 From such a flowery creature”  
 “Beautiful!”  
 My student murmured, rapt,—  
 “Mark how she stirs!”  
 Just waves her head, as if a flower  
 indeed,  
 Touched far off by the vain breath  
 of our talk”  
 At which that bilious Grimwald (he  
 who writes  
 For the Renovator), who had seemed  
 absorbed  
 Upon the table-book of autographs  
 (I dare say mentally he crunched the  
 bones  
 Of all those writers, wishing them  
 alive  
 To feel his tooth in earnest), turned  
 short round  
 With low carnivorous laugh,—“A  
 flower, of course!”  
 She neither sews nor spins,—and  
 takes no thought  
 Of her garments falling off”  
 The student flinched,  
 Sir Blaise, the same, then both,  
 drawing back their chairs  
 As if they spied black-beetles on the  
 floor,  
 Pursued their talk, without a word  
 being thrown  
 To the critic,  
 Good Sir Blaise's brow is high  
 And noticeably narrow a strong  
 wind,  
 You fancy, might unroof him sud-  
 denly,  
 And blow that great top attic off his  
 head

So piled with feudal relics    You admire  
 His nose in profile, though you miss  
     his chin,  
 But, though you miss his chin, you  
     seldom miss  
 His golden cross worn innermost  
     (carved  
 For penance, by a saintly Styrian  
     monk  
 Whose flesh was too much with him),  
     slipping through  
 Some unaware unbuttoned casualty  
 Of the under-waistcoat    With an  
     absent air  
 Sir Blaise sate fingering it and speak-  
     ing low,  
 While I, upon the sofa, heard it all  
  
 "My dear young friend, if we could  
     bear our eyes  
 Like blessedest St Lucy, on a plate,  
 They would not trick us into choosing  
     wives  
 As doublets, by the colour    Other-  
     wise  
 Our fathers chose,—and therefore,  
     when they had hung  
 Their household keys about a lady's  
     waist,  
 The sense of duty gave her dignity  
 She kept her bosom holy to her  
     babes,  
 And, if a moralist reproved her dress,  
 'Twas 'Too much starch!'—and  
     not, 'Too little lawn!'"

"Now, pshaw!" returned the other  
     in a heat,  
 A little fretted by being called  
     "young friend,"  
 Or so I took it,—“for St Lucy's  
     sake,  
 If she's the saint to curse by, let us  
     leave  
 Our fathers—plagued enough about  
     our sons!"  
 (He stroked his beardless chin) "yes,  
     plagued, sir, plagued  
 The future generations lie on us  
 As heavy as the nightmare of a seer,  
 Our meat and drink grow painful pro-  
     phesy  
 I ask you,—have we leisure, if we  
     liked,  
 To hollow out our weary hands to keep

Your intermittent rushlight of the  
     past  
 From draughts in lobbies? Preju-  
     dice of sex  
 And marriage-laws    the socket  
     drops them through  
 While we two speak,—however may  
     protest  
 Some over-delicate nostrils, like your  
     own,  
 'Gainst odours thence arising"  
     "You are young,"  
 Sir Blaise objected  
     "If I am," he said  
 With fire,—“though somewhat less  
     so than I seem,  
 The young run on before, and see the  
     thing  
 That's coming    Reverence for the  
     young, I cry  
 In that new church for which the  
     world's near ripe  
 You'll have the younger in the  
     Elder's chair  
 Presiding with his ivory front of  
     hope  
 O'er foreheads clawed by cruel  
     carion-birds  
 Of life's experience"  
     "Pray your blessing, sir"  
 Sir Blaise replied good-humouredly,  
     —“I plucked  
 A silver hair this morning from my  
     beard,  
 Which left me your inferior    Would  
     I were  
 Eighteen, and worthy to admonish  
     you!  
 If young men of your order run be-  
     fore  
 To see such sights as sexual preju-  
     dice  
 And marriage-law dissolved,—in  
     plainer words,  
 A general concubinage expressed  
 In a universal prunency,—the thing  
 Is scarce worth running fast for, and  
     you'd gain  
 By loitering with your elders"  
     "Ah," he said,  
 "Who, getting to the top of Pisgah-  
     hill,  
 Can talk with one at bottom of the  
     view,  
 To make it comprehensible? Why,  
     Leigh

Himself, although our ablest man, I  
 said  
 Is scarce advanced to see as far as this,  
 Which some are he takes up imper-  
 fectly  
 The social question—by one handle—  
 leaves  
 The rest to trail A Christian  
 Socrilist,  
 Is Romney Leigh, you understand "  
 "Not I  
 I disbelieve in Christian-pagans,  
 much  
 As you in women-fishes If we mix  
 Two colours, we lose both, and make  
 a third  
 Distinct from either Mark you!  
 to mistake  
 A colour is the sign of a sick brain,  
 And mine, I thank the saints, is  
 clear and cool  
 A neutral tint is here impossible  
 The church—and by the church, I  
 mean, of course,  
 The catholic, apostolic, mother-  
 church—  
 Draws lines as plain and straight  
 as her own wall,  
 Inside of which, are Christians,  
 obviously,  
 And outside dogs "  
 "We thank you Well I know  
 The ancient mother-church would  
 fain still bite,  
 For all her toothless gums,—as Leigh  
 himself  
 Would fain be a Christian still, for  
 all his wit,  
 Pass that, you two may settle it,  
 for me  
 You're slow in England In a  
 month I learnt  
 At Gottingen, enough philosophy  
 To stock your English schools for fifty  
 years,  
 Pass that, too Here, alone, I stop  
 you short,  
 —Supposing a true man like Leigh  
 could stand  
 Unequal in the stature of his life  
 To the height of his opinions Choose  
 a wife  
 Because of a smooth skin?—not he,  
 not he!  
 He'd rail at Venus' self for creaking  
 shoes

Unless she walked his way of right-  
 eousness  
 And if he takes a Venus Meretrix  
 (No imputation on the lady there),  
 Be sure that, by some sleight of  
 Christian art,  
 He has metamorphosed and con-  
 verted her  
 To a Blessed Virgin "  
 "Soft!" Sir Blaise drew breath  
 As if it hurt him,— "Soft! no blas-  
 phemy,  
 I pray you!"  
 "The first Christians did the thing,  
 Why not the last?" asked he of  
 Gottingen,  
 With just that shade of sneering on the  
 lip,  
 Compensates for the lagging of the  
 beard,—  
 "And so the case is If that fairest  
 fair  
 Is talked of as the future wife of Leigh,  
 She's talked of, too, at least as cer-  
 tainly,  
 As Leigh's disciple You may find  
 her name  
 On all his missions and commissions,  
 schools,  
 Asylums, hospitals,—he has had her  
 down,  
 With other ladies whom her starry  
 lead  
 Persuaded from their spheres, to his  
 country-place  
 In Shropshire, to the famed phalan-  
 stery  
 At Leigh Hall, Christianised from  
 Fournier's own  
 (In which he has planted out his sap-  
 ling stocks  
 Of knowledge into social nurseries),  
 And there, they say, she has tarried  
 half a week,  
 And milked the cows, and churned,  
 and pressed the curd,  
 And said 'my sister' to the lowest  
 drab  
 Of all the assembled castaways,  
 such girls!  
 Ay, sided with them at the washing-  
 tub—  
 Conceive, Sir Blaise, those naked  
 perfect arms,  
 Round glittering arms, plunged elbow  
 deep in suds,

Like wild swans had in lilies all  
a-shake "

Lord Howe came up " What, talk-  
ing poetry

So near the image of the unfavour-  
ing Muse ?

That's you, Miss Leigh I've watched  
you half an hour,

Precisely as I watched the statue  
called

A 'Pallas' in the Vatican,—you  
mind

The face, Sir Blaise ?—intensely  
calm and sad,

As wisdom cut it off from fellowship —  
But *that* spoke louder Not a word  
from *you* !

And these two gentlemen were  
bold, I marked,

And unabashed by even your silence "

" Ah "

Said I, " my dear Lord Howe, you  
shall not speak

To a printing woman who has lost her  
place

(The sweet safe corner of the house-  
hold fire

Behind the heads of children), com-  
pliments,

As if she were a woman We who  
have clipt

The curls before our eyes, may see at  
least

As plain as men do speak out, man  
to man,

No compliments, beseech you "

" Friend to friend,

Let that be We are sad to-night, I  
saw

(—Good-night, Sir Blaise ! Ah,  
Smith—he has slipped away),

I saw you across the room, and  
stayed, Miss Leigh,

To keep a crowd of lion-hunters off,  
With faces toward your jungle

There were three,  
A spacious lady, five feet ten and fat,

Who has the devil in her (and there's  
room)

For walking to and fro upon the earth,  
From Chippewa to China, she

requires

Your autograph upon a tinted leaf

'Twixt Queen Pomare's and Em-  
peror Soulouque's,

Pray give it, she has energies,  
though fat

For me, I'd rather see a rick on fire  
Than such a woman angry Then a

youth  
Fresh from the backwoods, green as

the under-boughs,  
Asks modestly, Miss Leigh, to kiss

your shoe  
And adds, he has an epic, in twelve

parts  
Which when you've read, you'll do it

for his boot,—  
All which I saved you, and absorb

next week  
Both manuscript and man, because a

lord  
Is still more potent than a poetess,

With any extreme republican Ah,  
ah,

You smile at last, then "

" Thank you "

" Leave the smile

I'll lose the thanks for't,—ay, and  
throw you in

My transatlantic girl, with golden  
eyes,

That draws you to her splendid  
whiteness, as

The pistil of a water-lily draws,  
Adust with gold Those girls across

the sea  
Are tyrannously pretty,—and I

swore  
(She seemed to me an innocent,

frank girl)  
To bring her to you for a woman's kiss,

Not now but on some other day or  
week

—We'll call it perjury, I give her up "

" No, bring her "

" Now," said he, " you make  
it hard

To touch such goodness with a  
grimy palm

I thought to tease you well, and  
fret you cross,

And steel myself, when rightly vexed  
with you,

For telling you a thing to tease you  
more "

" Of Romney ? "

" No, no, nothing worse,"  
he cried,

"Of Romney Leigh, than what is  
buzzed about,—  
That *he* is taken in an eye-trap too  
Like many half as wise The thing  
I mean  
Refers to you, not him"  
"Refers to me"  
He echoed,—"*Me!* You sound it  
like a stone  
Dropped down a dry well very list-  
lessly,  
By one who never thinks about the  
toad  
Alive at the bottom Presently per-  
haps  
You'll sound your '*me*' more  
proudly—till I shrink"

"Lord Howe's the toad, then, in this  
question?"

"Brief,  
We'll take it graver Give me  
sofa-room,  
And quiet hearing You know  
Eglinton,  
John Eglinton, of Eglinton in Kent?"

"Is *he* the toad? he's rather like  
the snail,  
Known chiefly for the house upon his  
back  
Divide the man and house—you kill  
the man,  
That's Eglinton of Eglinton, Lord  
Howe"

He answered grave "A reputable  
man,  
An excellent landlord of the olden  
stamp,  
If somewhat slack in new philan-  
thropies,  
Who keeps his birthdays with a  
tenants' dance,  
Is hard upon them when they miss  
the church  
Or keep their children back from  
catechism,  
But not ungentle when the aged poor  
Pick sticks at hedge-sides, nay, I've  
heard him say,  
'The old dame has a twinge because  
she stoops  
That's punishment enough for  
felony'"

"O tender hearted landlord! May  
I take  
My long lease with him, when the  
time arrives  
For gathering winter faggots!"  
"He likes art,  
Buys books and pictures of a  
certain kind,  
Neglects no patent duty, a good  
son"

"To a most obedient mother Born  
to wear  
His father's shoes, he wears her hus-  
band's too  
Indeed, I've heard it's touching  
Dear Lord Howe,  
You shall not praise *me* so against  
your heart,  
When I'm at worst for praise and  
faggots"

"Be  
Less bitter with me, for in  
short" he said  
"I have a letter, which he urged me  
so  
To bring you I could scarcely  
choose but yield  
Insisting that a new love passing  
through  
The hand of an old friendship,  
caught from it  
Some reconciling perfume"  
"Love, you say?  
My lord, I cannot love I only find  
The rhymes for love,—and that's not  
love, my lord  
Take back your letter"  
"Pause you'll read it first?"

"I will not read it it is stereotyped,  
The same he wrote to,—anybody's  
name,—  
Anne Blythe, the actress, when she  
had died so true,  
A duchess fainted in a private box  
Pauline, the dancer, after the great  
*pas*,  
In which her little feet winked  
overhead  
Like other fireflies, and amazed the  
pit  
Or Balducci, when her F in alt  
Had touched the silver tops of heaven  
itself  
With such a pungent soul-dart, even  
the Queen

Laid softly, each to each, her white-gloved palms,  
 And sighed for joy or else (I thank your friend)  
 Aurora Leigh,—when some indifferent rhymes,  
 Like those the boys sang round the holy ox  
 On Memphis highway chanced, perhaps, to set  
 Our Apis public lowing Oh, he wants,  
 Instead of any worthy wife at home,  
 A star upon his stage of Eglinton!  
 Advise him that he is not over-shrewd  
 In being so little modest a dropped star  
 Makes bitter waters, says a Book I've read,—  
 And there's his unread letter "  
 "My dear friend,"  
 Lord Howe began

In haste I tore the phrase  
 "You mean your friend of Eglinton, or me?"

"I mean you, you," he answered with some fire

"A happy life means prudent compromise,

The tare runs through the farmer's garnered sheaves,

But though the gleaner's apron holds pure wheat,

We count her poorer Tare with wheat, we cry,

And good with drawbacks You, you love your art,

And, certain of vocation, set your soul

On utterance Only in this world we have made,

(They say God made it first, but, if He did,

'Twas so long since, and, since, we have spoiled it so,

He scarce would know it, if He looked this way,

From hells we preach of, with the flames blown out.)

In this bad, twisted, topsy-turvy world,

Where all the heaviest wrongs get uppermost,—

In this uneven, unfostering England here,

Where ledger-strokes and sword-strokes count indeed,

But soul-strokes merely tell upon the flesh

They strike from,—it is hard to stand for art,

Unless some golden tripod from the sea

Be fished up, by Apollo's divine chance,

To throne such feet as yours, my prophetess,

At Delphi Think,—the god comes down as fierce

As twenty bloodhounds! shakes you, strangles you,

Until the oracular shriek shall ooze in froth!

At best it's not all ease,—at worst too hard

A place to stand on is a 'vantage gained,

And here's your tripod To be plain, dear friend,

You're poor, except in what you richly give,

You labour for your own bread painfully,

Or ere you pour our wine For art's sake, pause"

I answered slow,—as some wayfaring man,

Who feels himself at night too far from home,

Makes steadfast face against the bitter wind

"Is art so less a thing than virtue is, That artists first must cater for their ease

Or ever they make issue past themselves

To generous use? alas, and is it so,

That we, who would be somewhat clean, must sweep

Our ways as well as walk them, and no friend

Confirm us nobly,—'Leave results to God,

But you, be clean?' What! 'prudent compromise

Makes acceptable life,' you say instead,



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| <p>             You, you, Lord Howe?—in things in-<br/>             different, well<br/>             For instance, compromise the wheaten<br/>             bread<br/>             For rye, the meat for lentils, silk for<br/>             serge,<br/>             And sleep on down, if needs, for<br/>             sleep on straw,<br/>             But there, end compromise I will<br/>             not bate<br/>             One artist-dream, on straw or down,<br/>             my lord,<br/>             Nor pinch my liberal soul, though I<br/>             be poor,<br/>             Nor cease to love high, though I live<br/>             thus low "           </p> <p>             So speaking, with less anger in my<br/>             voice<br/>             Than sorrow, I rose quickly to de-<br/>             part,<br/>             While he, thrown back upon the<br/>             noble shame<br/>             Of such high-stumbling natures, mur-<br/>             mured words,<br/>             The right words after wrong ones<br/>             Ah, the man<br/>             Is worthy, but so given to entertain<br/>             Impossible plans of superhuman life,—<br/>             He sets his virtues on so raised a<br/>             shelf,<br/>             To keep them at the grand millen-<br/>             nial height,<br/>             He has to mount a stool to get at<br/>             them,<br/>             And, meantime, lives on quite the<br/>             common way,<br/>             With everybody's morals           </p> <p>             As we passed,<br/>             Lord Howe insisting that his friendly<br/>             arm<br/>             Should oar me across the sparkling<br/>             brawling stream<br/>             Which swept from room to room,—<br/>             we fell at once<br/>             On Lady Waldemar "Miss Leigh,"<br/>             she said,<br/>             And gave me such a smile, so cold<br/>             and bright,<br/>             As if she tried it in a 'tiring glass<br/>             And liked it "all to-night I've<br/>             strained at you,<br/>             As babes at baubles held up out of<br/>             reach<br/>             By spiteful nurses ("Never snatch,"<br/>             they say,)           </p> | <p>             And there you sate, most perfectly<br/>             shut in<br/>             By good Sir Blaise and clever Mister<br/>             Smith,<br/>             And then our dear Lord Howe! at<br/>             last, indeed,<br/>             I almost snatched I have a world<br/>             to speak<br/>             About your cous n's place in Shrop<br/>             shire, where<br/>             I've been to see his work our<br/>             work,—you heaid<br/>             I went? and of a letter, yester-<br/>             day,<br/>             In which, if I should read a page or<br/>             two,<br/>             You might feel interest, though you're<br/>             locked of course<br/>             In literary toil—You'll like to hear<br/>             Your last book lies at the phalan-<br/>             stery,<br/>             As judged innocuous for the elder<br/>             girls<br/>             And younger women who still care<br/>             for books<br/>             We all must read, you see, before we<br/>             live<br/>             But slowly the ineffable light comes<br/>             up,<br/>             And, as it deepens, drowns the<br/>             written word,—<br/>             So said your cousin, while we stood<br/>             and felt<br/>             A sunset from his favourite beech-<br/>             tree seat<br/>             He might have been a poet if he<br/>             would,<br/>             But then he saw the higher thing at<br/>             once,<br/>             And climbed to it I think he looks<br/>             well now,<br/>             Has quite got over that unfor-<br/>             tunate<br/>             Ah, ah I know it moved you<br/>             Tender-heart!<br/>             You took a liking to the wretched girl<br/>             Perhaps you thought the marriage<br/>             suitable,<br/>             Who knows? a poet hankers for<br/>             romance,<br/>             And so on As for Romney Leigh,<br/>             'tis sure<br/>             He never loved her,—never By the<br/>             way,<br/>             You have not heard of her? <br/>             quite out of sight,           </p> |
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And out of saving ? lost in every  
sense ? ”

She might have gone on talking half  
an hour,

And I stood still, and cold, and pale,  
I think,

As a garden-statue a child pelts with  
snow

For pretty pastime Every now and  
then

I put in “ Yes ” or “ No,” I scarce  
knew why,

The blind man walks wherever the  
dog pulls,

And so I answered Till Lord Howe  
broke in,

“ What penance takes the wretch who  
interrupts

The talk of charming women ? I,  
at last,

Must brave it Pardon, Lady Walde-  
mar !

The lady on my arm is tired, unwell,  
And loyally I’ve promised she shall  
say

No harder word this evening, than  
good-night

The rest her face speaks for her ”—  
Then we went

And I breathe large at home I drop  
my cloak,

Unclasp my girdle, loose the band  
that ties

My hair now could I but un-  
loose my soul !

We are sepulchred alive in this close  
world,

And want more room

The charming woman there—  
This reckoning up and writing down  
her talk

Affects me singularly How she  
talked

To pain me ! woman’s spite !—you  
wear steel-mail,

A woman takes a housewife from her  
breast,

And plucks the delicatest needle out  
As ’twere a rose, and pricks you  
carefully

’Neath nails, ’neath eyelids, in your  
nostrils,—say,

A beast would roar so tortured,—but  
a man,

A human creature, must not, shall  
not flinch,

No, not for shame

What vexes, after all,  
Is just that such as she, with such as I,  
Knows how to vex Sweet heaven,

she takes me up  
As if she had fingered me and dog-  
eared me

And spelled me by the fireside, half  
a life !

She knows my turns, my feeble points.  
—What then ?

The knowledge of a thing implies the  
thing,

Of course, she found *that* in me, she  
saw *that*,

Her pencil underscored *this* for a fault,  
And I, still ignorant Shut the book  
up,—close !

And crush that beetle in the leaves  
O heart,

At last we shall grow hard too, like  
the rest,

And call it self-defence because we are  
soft

And after all, now, why should I be  
pained,

That Romney Leigh, my cousin,  
should espouse

This Lady Waldemar ? And, say,  
she held

Her newly-blossomed gladness in my  
face,

’Twas natural surely, if not generous,  
Considering how, when winter held  
her fast,

I helped the frost with mine, and  
pained her more

Than she pains me Pains me !—but  
wherefore pained ?

’Tis clear my cousin Romney wants  
a wife,—

So, good !—The man’s need of the  
woman, here,

Is greater than the woman’s of the  
man,

And easier served, for where the man  
discerns

A sex (ah, ah, the man can general se,  
Said he) we see but one, ideally

And really where we yearn to loose  
ourselves

And melt like white pearls in another’s  
wine,

He seeks to double himself by what he  
loves  
And make his drink more costly by  
our pearls  
At board, at bed, at work, and holiday,  
It is not good for man to be alone,—  
And that's his way of thinking, first  
and last,  
And thus my cousin Romney wants a  
wife

But then my cousin sets his dignity  
On personal virtue If he under-  
stands  
By love, like others, self-aggrandise-  
ment,  
It is that he may verily be great  
By doing rightly and kindly Once  
he thought  
For charitable ends set duly forth  
In Heaven's white judgment-book, to  
marry ah,  
We'll call her name Aurora Leigh,  
although  
She's changed since then !—and once,  
for social ends,  
Poor Marian Erle, my sister Marian  
Erle,  
My woodland sister, sweet maid  
Marian,  
Whose memory moans on in me like  
the wind  
Through ill-shut casements making  
me more sad  
Than ever I find reasons for Alas,  
Poor pretty plaintive face, embodied  
ghost,  
He finds it easy, then, to clap thee off  
From pulling at his sleeve and book  
and pen,—  
He locks thee out at night into the  
cold  
Away from butting with thy horny  
eyes  
Against his crystal dreams,—that,  
now, he's strong  
To love anew ? that Lady Waldemar  
Succeeds my Marian ?  
After all, why not ?  
He loved not Marian, more than once  
he loved  
Aurora If he loves, at last, that  
Third,  
Albert she prove as slippery as spilt  
oil  
On marble floors, I will not augur him

Ill luck for that Good love howe'er  
ill-placed,  
Is better for a man's soul in the end,  
Than if he loved ill what deserves  
love well  
A pagan kissing, for a step of Pan,  
The wild-goat's hoof-print on the  
loamy down,  
Exceeds our modern thinker who  
turns back  
The strata granite, limestone,  
coal and clay,  
Concluding coldly with, " Here's law !  
Where's God ? "

And then at worse,—if Romney loves  
her not,—  
At worst,—if he's incapable of love,  
Which may be—then indeed, for such  
a man  
Incapable of love, she's good enough,  
For she, at worst too, is a woman still  
And loves him as the sort of  
woman can  
My loose long hair began to burn and  
creep,  
Alive to the very ends, about my  
knees  
I swept it backward as the wind  
sweeps flame,  
With the passion of my hands Ah,  
Romney laughed  
One day (how full the memories  
come up !)  
" —Your Florence fireflies live on in  
your hair,"  
He said, " it gleams so " Well, I  
wring them out,  
My fireflies, made a knot as hard as  
life,  
Of those loose, soft, impracticable  
curls,  
And then sat down and thought  
" She shall not think  
Her thought of me,"—and drew my  
desk and wrote  
" Dear Lady Waldemar, I could not  
speak  
With people round me, nor can sleep  
to-night  
And not speak, after the great news I  
heard  
Of you and of my cousin May you be  
Most happy, and the good he meant  
the world,

|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
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| <p>Replenish his own life Say what I<br/>say,<br/>And let my word be sweeter for your<br/>mouth,<br/>As you are <i>you</i> I only Aurora<br/>Leigh "</p> <p>That's quiet, guarded ! though she<br/>hold it up<br/>Against the light, she'll not see<br/>through it more<br/>Than lies there to be seen So much<br/>for pride ,<br/>And now for peace, a little ! Let me<br/>stop<br/>All writing back " Sweet thanks,<br/>my sweetest friend,<br/>" You've made more joyful my great<br/>joy itself "<br/>—No, that's too simple ! she would<br/>twist it thus,<br/>" My joy would still be as sweet as<br/>thyme in drawers,<br/>However shut up in the dark and dry ,<br/>But violets, aired and dewed by love<br/>like yours,<br/>Out-smell all thyme ! we keep that in<br/>our clothes<br/>But drop the other down our bosoms,<br/>till,<br/>They smell like " ah, I see her<br/>writing back<br/>Just so She'll make a nosegay of<br/>her words<br/>And tie it with blue ribbons at the end<br/>To suit a poet ,—pshaw !<br/>And then we'll have<br/>The call to church , the broken, sad,<br/>bad dream<br/>Dreamed out at last , the marriage-<br/>vow complete<br/>With the marriage-breakfast , pray-<br/>ing in white gloves,<br/>Drawn off in haste for drinking pagan<br/>toasts<br/>In somewhat stronger wine than any<br/>sipped<br/>By gods since Bacchus had his way<br/>with grapes</p> <p>A postscript stops all that, and rescues<br/>me<br/>" You need not write I have been<br/>overworked,<br/>And think of leaving London, Eng-<br/>land even,</p> | <p>And hastening to get nearer to the<br/>sun,<br/>Where men sleep better So, adieu "</p> <p>—I fold<br/>And seal,—and now I'm out of all<br/>the coil ,<br/>I breathe now , I spring upward like a<br/>branch,<br/>A ten-years school-boy with a crooked<br/>stick<br/>May pull down to his level, in search<br/>of nuts,<br/>But cannot hold a moment How we<br/>twang<br/>Back on the blue sky, and assert our<br/>height,<br/>While he stares after ! Now, the<br/>wonder seems<br/>That I could wrong myself by such a<br/>doubt<br/>We poets always have uneasy hearts ,<br/>Because our hearts, large-rounded as<br/>the globe,<br/>Can turn but one side to the sun at<br/>once<br/>We are used to dip our artist-hands<br/>in gall<br/>And potash, trying potentialities<br/>Of alternated colour, till at last<br/>We get confused, and wonder for our<br/>skin<br/>How nature tinged it first Well—<br/>here's the true<br/>Good flesh-colour, I recognise my<br/>hand,—<br/>Which Romney Leigh may clasp as<br/>just a friend's<br/>And keep his clean</p> <p>And now my Italy<br/>Alas if we could ride with naked souls<br/>And make no noise and pay no price<br/>at all,<br/>I would have seen thee sooner, Italy —<br/>For still I have heard thee crying<br/>through my life,<br/>Thou piercing silence of ecstatic graves,<br/>Men call that name !</p> <p>But even a witch, to-day,<br/>Must melt down golden pieces in the<br/>nard<br/>Wherewith to anoint her broomstick<br/>ere she rides ,<br/>And poets evermore are scant of gold,<br/>And, if they find a piece behind the<br/>door,</p> |
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It turns by sunset to a withered leaf  
 The Devil himself scarce trusts his  
 patented  
 Gold-making art to any who make  
 rhymes  
 But culls his Faustus from philoso-  
 phers  
 And not from poets "Leave my  
 Job," said God,  
 And so, the Devil leaves him without  
 pence,  
 And poverty proves, plainly, special  
 grace  
 In these new, just, administrative  
 times  
 Men clamour for an order of merit  
 Why?  
 Here's black bread on the table, and  
 no wine!  
 At least I am a poet in being poor,  
 Thank God I wonder if the manu-  
 script  
 Of my long poem, if 'twere sold out-  
 'g<sup>1</sup> 't,  
 Wo<sup>1</sup> I c<sup>1</sup> en enough to buy me shoes,  
 to go  
 A-foot, (thrown in, the necessary  
 patch  
 For the other side the Alps) ? it can-  
 not be  
 I fear that I must sell this residue  
 Of my father's books, although the  
 Elzevirs  
 Have fly-leaves over-written by his  
 hand,  
 In faded notes as thick and fine and  
 brown  
 As cobwebs on a tawny monument  
 Of the old Greeks—*conferenda hæc*  
*cum his*—  
*Corrupte citat—lege potius,*  
 And so on, in the scholar's regal way  
 Of giving judgment on the parts of  
 speech,  
 As if he sate on all twelve thrones up-  
 piled,  
 Arraigning Israel Ay, but books  
 and notes  
 Must go together And this "Proclus"  
 too,  
 In quaintly dear contracted Grecian  
 types,  
 Fantastically crumpled, like his  
 thoughts  
 Which would not seem too plain, you  
 go round twice

For one step forward, then you take  
 it back,  
 Because you're somewhat giddy!  
 there's the rule  
 For "Proclus" Ah, I stained this  
 middle leaf  
 With pressing in't my Florence iris-  
 bell,  
 Long stalk and all my father chided  
 me  
 For that stain of blue blood,—I recol-  
 lect  
 The peevish turn his voice took,—  
 "Silly girls,  
 Who plant their flowers in our philo-  
 sophy  
 To make it fine, and only spoil the  
 book!"  
 No more of it, Aurora" Yes—no  
 more!  
 Ah, blame of love, that's sweeter than  
 all praise  
 Of those who love not! 'tis so lost to  
 me,  
 I cannot, in such beggared life, afford  
 To lose my "Proclus" Not for Flor-  
 ence, even  
 The kissing Judas "Wolff," shall go  
 instead,  
 Who builds us such a royal book as  
 this  
 To honour a chief-poet, folio-built,  
 And writes, above, "The house of  
 Nobody"  
 Who floats in cream, as rich as any  
 sucked  
 From Juno's breasts, the broad  
 Homeric lines,  
 And, while with their spondaic pro-  
 digious mouths  
 They lap the lucent margins as babe-  
 gods,  
 Proclaims them bastards Wolff's  
 an atheist,  
 And if the "Iliad" fell out as he says,  
 By mere fortuitous concourse of old  
 songs,  
 We'll guess as much, too, for the  
 universe  
 That "Wolff," those "Platos" sweep  
 the upper shelves  
 As clean as this, and so I am almost  
 rich,  
 Which means, not forced to think of  
 being poor

In sight of ends To-morrow no  
delay  
I'll wait in Paris till good Carrington  
Dispose of such, and, having chaffered  
for  
My book's price with the publisher,  
direct  
All proceeds to me Just a line to ask  
His help

And now I come, my Italy,  
My own hills! Are you 'ware of me,  
my hills,  
How I burn toward you? do you feel  
to-night  
The urgency and yearning of my soul,  
As sleeping mothers feel the sucking  
babe  
And smile?—Nay, not so much as  
when, in heat,  
Vain lightnings catch at your invio-  
late tops,  
And tremble while ye are steadfast  
Still, ye go  
Your own determined, calm, indiffer-  
ent way  
Toward sunrise, shade by shade, and  
light by light,  
Of all the grand progression nought  
left out,  
As if God verily made you for your-  
selves,  
And would not interrupt your life  
with ours

## SIXTH BOOK

THE English have a scornful insular  
way  
Of calling the French light The  
levity  
Is in the judgment only, which yet  
stands,  
For say a foolish thing but oft enough  
(And here's the secret of a hundred  
creeds,—  
Men get opinions as boys learn to  
spell,  
By reiteration chiefly) the same thing  
Shall pass at last for absolutely wise,  
And not with fools exclusively And  
so,  
We say the French are light, as if we  
said  
The cat mews, or the milch-cow gives  
us milk  
Say rather, cats are milked, and  
milch-cows mew

For what is lightness but inconse-  
quence,  
Vague fluctuation 'twixt effect and  
cause  
Compelled by neither? Is a bullet  
light,  
That dashes from the gun-mouth,  
while the eye  
Winks, and the heart beats one, to  
flatten itself  
To a wafer on the white speck on a  
wall  
A hundred paces off? Even so direct,  
So sternly undivertible of aim,  
Is this French people

All, idealists  
Too absolute and earnest, with them  
all  
The idea of a knife cuts real flesh,  
And still, devouring the safe inter-  
val,  
Which Nature placed between the  
thought and act,  
With those too fiery and impatient  
souls,  
They threaten conflagration to the  
world  
And rush with most unscrupulous  
logic on  
Impossible practice Set your orators  
To blow upon them with loud windy  
mouths  
Through watchword phrases, jest or  
sentiment,  
Which drive our burly brutal English  
mobs  
Like so much chaff, whichever way  
they blow,—  
This light French people will not thus  
be driven  
They turn indeed, but then they  
turn upon  
Some central pivot of their thought  
and choice,  
And veer out by the force of holding  
fast  
—That's hard to understand, for  
Englishmen  
Unused to abstract questions, and  
untrained  
To trace the involutions, valve by  
valve,  
In each orb'd bulb-root of a general  
truth,  
And mark what subtly fine integu-  
ment

Divides opposed compartments  
 Freedom's self  
 Comes concrete to us, to be understood,  
 Fixed in a feudal form incarnately  
 To suit our ways of thought and reverence,  
 The special form, with us, being still the thing  
 With us I say though I'm of Italy  
 By mother's birth and grave, by father's grave  
 And memory, let it be,—a poet's heart  
 Can swell to a pair of nationalities,  
 However ill-lodged in a woman's breast  
  
 And so I am strong to love this noble France,  
 This poet of the nations, who dreams on  
 And wails on (while the household goes to wreck)  
 For ever, after some ideal good,—  
 Some equal poise of sex, some un-vowed love  
 Inviolable, some spontaneous brotherhood,  
 Some wealth, that leaves none poor and finds none tired,  
 Some freedom of the many, that respects  
 The wisdom of the few Heroic dreams!  
 Sublime, to dream so, natural, to wake  
 And sad, to use such lofty scaffoldings,  
 Erected for the building of a church,  
 To build instead, a brothel or a prison—  
 May God save France!  
 However she have sighed  
 Her great soul up into a great man's face,  
 To flush his temples out so gloriously  
 That few dare carp at Cæsar for being bald,  
 What then?—this Cæsar represents,  
 not reigns,  
 And is no despot, though twice absolute,  
 This Head has all the people for a heart,

This purple's lined with the democracy —  
 Now let him see to it! for a rent within  
 Must leave irreparable rags without  
 A serious riddle find such anywhere  
 Except in France, and when it's found in France,  
 Be sure to read it rightly So, I mused  
 Up and down, up and down, the terraced streets,  
 The glittering boulevards, the white colonnades  
 Of fair fantastic Paris who wears boughs  
 Like plumes, as if man made them,—tossing up  
 Her fountains in the sunshine from the squares,  
 As dice i' the game of beauty, sure to win,  
 Or as she blew the down-balls of her to dreams,  
 And only waited for their falling back,  
 To breathe up more, and count her festive hours  
  
 The city swims in verdure, beautiful  
 As Venice on the waters, the sea-swan  
 What bosky gardens, dropped in close-walled courts,  
 As plums in ladies' laps, who start and laugh  
 What miles of streets that run on after trees,  
 Still carrying the necessary shops,  
 Those open caskets, with the jewels seen!  
 And trade is art, and art's philosophy,  
 In Paris There's a silk for instance, there,  
 As worth an artist's study for the folds,  
 As that bronze opposite! nay, the bronze has faults,  
 Art's here too artful,—conscious as a maid,  
 Who leans to mark her shadow on the wall  
 Until she lose a 'vantage in her step  
 Yet Art walks forward, and knows where to walk  
 The artists also, are idealists,  
 Too absolute for nature, logical

To austerity in the application of  
 The special theory not a soul content  
 To paint a crooked pollard and an ass  
 As the English will because they find it so,  
 And like it somehow—Ah, the old  
 Tuileries  
 Is pulling its high cap down on its eyes  
 Confounded, conscience-stricken, and amazed  
 By the apparition of a new fair face  
 In those devouring mirrors Through the grate  
 Within the gardens what a heap of babes  
 Swept up like leaves beneath the chestnut-trees  
 From every street and alley of the town,  
 By the ghosts perhaps, that blow too bleak this way  
 A looking for their heads Dear pretty babes  
 I'll wish them luck to have their ball-play out  
 Before the next change comes—And, farther on,  
 What statues, poised upon their columns fine,  
 As if to stand a moment were a feat  
 Against that blue! What squares! what breathing-room  
 For a nation that runs fast,—ay, runs against  
 The dentist's teeth At the corner, in pale rows,  
 Which grin at progress in an epigram  
 I walked the day out, listening to the chink  
 Of the first Napoleon's dry bones, in his second grave  
 By victories guarded 'neath the golden dome  
 That caps all Paris like a bubble  
 "Shall  
 These dry bones live?" thought Louis Philippe once,  
 And lived to know Herein is argument  
 For kings and politicians, but still more  
 For poets, who bear buckets to the well,

Of ampler draught  
 These crowds are very good  
 For meditation (when we are very strong),  
 Though love of beauty makes us timorous,  
 And draws us backward from the coarse town-sights  
 To count the daisies upon dappled fields,  
 And hear the streams bleat on among the hills  
 In innocent and indolent repose,  
 While still with silken elegiac thoughts  
 We wind out from us the distracting world,  
 And die into the chrysalis of a man,  
 And leave the best that may, to come of us,  
 In some brown moth Be, rather, bold, and bear  
 To look into the swarthiest face of things,  
 For God's sake Who has made them

Seven days' work,  
 The last day shutting 'twixt its dawn and eve,  
 The whole work bettered, of the previous six!  
 Since God collected and resumed in man  
 The firmaments, the strata, and the lights,  
 Fish fowl, and beast, and insect,—all their trains  
 Of various life caught back upon His arm,  
 Reorganised, and constituted MAN,  
 The microcosm, the adding up of works,  
 Within whose fluttering nostrils, then, at last  
 Consummating Himself, the Maker sighed,  
 As some strong winner at the foot-race sighs  
 Touching the goal  
 Humanity is great,  
 And, if I would not rather pore upon  
 An ounce of common, ugly, human dust,  
 An artisan's palm, or a peasant's brow  
 Unsmooth, ignoble, save to me and God,



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| <p>             Than track old Nilus to his silver<br/>             roots,<br/>             And wait on all the changes of the<br/>             moon<br/>             Among the mountain-peaks of Thes-<br/>             saly<br/>             (Until her magic crystal round itself<br/>             For many a witch to see in)—set it<br/>             down<br/>             As weakness,—strength by no means<br/>             How is this,<br/>             That men of science, osteologists<br/>             And surgeons, beat some poets, in<br/>             respect<br/>             For nature,—count nought common<br/>             or unclean,<br/>             Spend raptures upon perfect speci-<br/>             mens<br/>             Of indurated veins, distorted joints,<br/>             Or beautiful new cases of curved<br/>             spine,<br/>             While we, we are shocked at nature's<br/>             falling off,<br/>             We dare to shrink back from her warts<br/>             and blains,<br/>             We will not, when she sneezes, look at<br/>             her,<br/>             Not even to say "God bless her"?<br/>             That's our wrong,<br/>             For that, she will not trust us often<br/>             with<br/>             Her larger sense of beauty and de-<br/>             sire,<br/>             But tethers us to a lily or a rose<br/>             And bids us diet on the dew inside,—<br/>             Left ignorant that the hungry beggar-<br/>             boy<br/>             (Who stares unseen against our ab-<br/>             sent eyes,<br/>             And wonders at the gods that we<br/>             must be,<br/>             To pass so careless for the oranges!)<br/>             Bears yet a breastful of a fellow-<br/>             world<br/>             To this world, undisparaged, unde-<br/>             spoiled,<br/>             And (while we scorn him for a flower<br/>             or two,<br/>             As being, Heaven help us, less poeti-<br/>             cal)<br/>             Contains, himself, both flowers and<br/>             firmaments<br/>             And surging seas and aspectable stars,<br/>             And all that we would push him out<br/>             of sight<br/>             In order to see nearer Let us pray           </p> | <p>             God's grace to keep God's image in<br/>             repute,<br/>             That so, the poet and philanthropist<br/>             (Even I and Romney), may stand side<br/>             by side,<br/>             Because we both stand face to face<br/>             with men<br/>             Contemplating the people in the<br/>             rough,—<br/>             Yet each so follow a vocation,—his<br/>             And mine<br/>             I walked on, musing with myself<br/>             On life and art and whether, after all,<br/>             A larger metaphysics might not help<br/>             Our physics, a completer poetry<br/>             Adjust our daily life and vulgar wants,<br/>             More fully than the special outside<br/>             plans<br/>             Phalansteries, material institutes,<br/>             The civil conscriptions and lay monas-<br/>             teries<br/>             Preferred by modern thinkers, as they<br/>             thought<br/>             The bread of man indeed made all his<br/>             life,<br/>             And washing seven times in the<br/>             "People's Baths,"<br/>             Were sovereign for a people's lep-<br/>             rosy,—<br/>             Still leaving out the essential pro-<br/>             phet's word<br/>             That comes in power On which we<br/>             thunder down,<br/>             We prophets, poets,—Virtue's in the<br/>             word!<br/>             The maker burnt the darkness up<br/>             with His,<br/>             To inaugurate the use of vocal life,<br/>             And, plant a poet's word even, deep<br/>             enough<br/>             In any man's breast, looking presently<br/>             For offshoots, you have done more<br/>             for the man,<br/>             Than if you dressed him in a broad-<br/>             cloth coat<br/>             And warmed his Sunday pottage at<br/>             your fire<br/>             Yet Romney leaves me<br/>             God! what face is that?<br/>             O Romney, O Marian!<br/>             Walking on the quays<br/>             And pulling thoughts to pieces<br/>             leisurely,<br/>             As if I caught at grasses in a field,<br/>             And bit them slow between my ab-<br/>             sent lips,           </p> |
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And shred them with my hands  
 What face is that ?  
 What a face, what a look, what a likeness ! Full on mine  
 The sudden blow of it came down, till all  
 My blood swam, my eyes dazzled  
 Then I sprang—  
 It was as if a meditative man  
 Were dreaming out a summer afternoon  
 And watching gnats a-prick upon a pond,  
 When something floats up suddenly,  
 Turns over a dead face, known once alive—  
 So old, so new ! It would be dreadful now  
 To lose the sight and keep the doubt of this  
 He plunges—ha ! he has lost it in the splash  
 I plunged—I tore the crowd up, either side,  
 And rushed on—forward, forward after her  
 Her ? whom ?  
 A woman sauntered slow, in front  
 Munching an apple,—she left off amazed  
 As if I had snatched it that's not she, at least  
 A man walked arm-linked with a lady veiled,  
 Both heads dropped closer than the need of talk  
 They started, he forgot her with his face,  
 And she, herself,—and clung to him as if  
 My look were fatal Such a stream of folk,  
 And all with cares and business of their own !  
 I ran the whole quay down against their eyes,  
 No Marian, nowhere Marian Al most, now  
 I could call "Marian, Marian," with the shriek  
 Of desperate creatures calling for the Dead  
 Where is she, was she ? was she anywhere ?

I stood still, breathless, gazing, straining out  
 In every uncertain distance, till, at last,  
 A gentleman abstracted as myself  
 Came full against me, then resolved the clash  
 In voluble excuses,—obviously  
 Some learned member of the Institute  
 Upon his way there, walking, for his health,  
 While meditating on the last "Discourse",  
 Pinching the empty air 'twixt finger and thumb,  
 From which the snuff being ousted by that shock,  
 Defiled his snow-white waistcoat, duly pricked  
 At the button-hole with honourable red,  
 "Madame, your pardon,"—there, he swerved from me  
 A metre, as confounded as he had heard  
 That Dumas would be chosen to fill up  
 The next chair vacant, by his "men in us"  
 Since when was genius found respectable ?  
 It passes in its place, indeed,—which means  
 The seventh floor back, or else the hospital  
 Revolving pistols are ingenious things,  
 But prudent men (Academics are)  
 Scarce keep them in the cupboard next the prunes  
 And so, abandoned to a bitter mirth,  
 I loitered to my inn O world, O world,  
 O jurists, rhymers, dreamers, what you please,  
 We play a weary game of hide-and-seek !  
 We shape a figure of our fantasy,  
 Call nothing something, and run after it  
 And lose it, lose ourselves too in the search,  
 Till, clash against us, comes a somebody  
 Who also has lost something and is lost,

Philosopher against philanthropist,  
 Academician against poet, man  
 Against woman, against the living  
 the dead —  
 Then home with a bad headache and  
 worse jest !

To change the water for my helio-  
 tropes  
 And yellow roses Paris has such  
 flowers  
 But England, also 'Twas a yellow  
 rose,  
 By that south window of the little  
 house  
 My cousin Romney gathered with his  
 hand  
 On all my birthdays for me, save the  
 last,  
 And then I shook the tree too rough,  
 too rough,  
 For roses to stay after

Now my maps  
 I must not linger here from Italy  
 Till the last nightingale is tired of  
 song,  
 And the last firefly dies off in the  
 maize  
 My soul's in haste to leap into the sun  
 And scorch and seethe itself to a finer  
 mood,  
 Which here, in this chill north, is apt  
 to stand

Too stuffy in former moulds  
 That face persists  
 It floats up, it turns over in my mind,  
 As like to Marian, as one dead is like  
 The same alive In very deed a face  
 And not a fancy, though it vanished  
 so,  
 The small fair face between the darks  
 of hair

I used to liken, when I saw her first  
 To a point of moonlit water down  
 a well

The low brow, the frank space be-  
 tween the eyes  
 Which always had the brown pathetic  
 look  
 Of a dumb creature who had been  
 beaten once,  
 And never since was easy with the  
 world

Ah, ah—now I remember perfectly  
 Those eyes, to-day,—how overlarge  
 they seemed,

As if some patient passionate despair  
 (Like a coal dropt and forgot on  
 tapestry,

Which slowly burns a widening circle  
 out)

Had burnt them larger, larger And  
 those eyes

To-day, I do remember, saw me too,  
 As I saw them, with conscious lids  
 astrain

In recognition Now a fantasy,  
 A simple shade or image of the brain,  
 Is merely passive, does not retroact,  
 Is seen, but sees not

'Twas a real face,  
 Perhaps a real Marian

Which being so,  
 I ought to write to Romney, "Mari-  
 an's here

Be comforted for Marian "

My pen fell,  
 My hands struck sharp together, as  
 hands do

Which hold at nothing Can I write  
 to him

A half truth ? can I keep my own soul  
 blind

To the other half, the worse ?  
 What are our souls,

If still, to run on straight a sober pace  
 Nor start at every pebble or dead leaf,  
 They must wear blinkers, ignore facts,  
 suppress

Six-tenths of the road ? Confront  
 the truth, my soul !

And oh, as truly as that was Marian's  
 face,

The arms of that same Marian clasped  
 a thing

Not hid so well beneath the  
 scanty shawl,

I cannot name it now for what it was

A child Small business has a cast-  
 away

Like Marian, with that crown of pros-  
 perous wives,

At which the gentlest she grows arro-  
 gant

And says " my child " Who'll find  
 an emerald ring

On a beggar's middle finger, and re-  
 quire

More testimony to convict a thief ?  
 A child's too costly for so mere a  
 wretch,

|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
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| <p>She filched it somewhere, and it means, with her,<br/>         Instead of honour, blessing,<br/>         merely shame</p> <p>I cannot write to Romney, "Here she is,<br/>         Here's Marian found ' I'll set you on her track<br/>         I saw her here, in Paris, and her child<br/>         She put away your love two years ago,<br/>         But, plainly, not to starve You suffered then,<br/>         And, now that you've forgot her utterly<br/>         As any last year's annual, in whose place<br/>         You've planted a thick flowering evergreen,<br/>         I choose, being kind, to write and tell you this<br/>         To make you wholly easy—she's not dead,<br/>         But only damned "</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">Stop there I go too fast,<br/>         I'm cruel like the rest,—in haste to take<br/>         The first stir in the arras for a rat,<br/>         And set my barking, biting thoughts upon't<br/>         —A child! what then? Suppose a neighbour's sick<br/>         And asked her, "Marian, carry out my child<br/>         In this spring air,"—I punish her for that?<br/>         Or say, the child should hold her round the neck<br/>         For good child-reasons, that he liked it so<br/>         And would not leave her—she had winning ways—<br/>         I brand her therefore, that she took the child?<br/>         Not so<br/>         I will not write to Romney Leigh<br/>         For now he's happy,—and she may indeed<br/>         Be guilty,—and the knowledge of her fault<br/>         Would draggle his smooth time But I, whose days<br/>         Are not so fine they cannot bear the rain,</p> | <p>And who, moreover, having seen her face,<br/>         Must see it again, <i>will</i> see it, by my hopes<br/>         Of one day seeing heaven too The police<br/>         Shall track her, hound her, ferret their own soil,<br/>         We'll dig this Paris to its catacombs<br/>         But certainly we'll find her, have her out,<br/>         And save her, if she will or will not—child<br/>         Or no child,—if a child, then one to save!</p> <p>The long weeks passed on without consequence<br/>         As easy find a footstep on the sand<br/>         The morning after spring-tide, as the trace<br/>         Of Marian's feet between the incessant surfs<br/>         Of this live flood She may have moved this way,—<br/>         But so the starfish does, and crosses out<br/>         The dent of her small shoe The foiled police<br/>         Renounced me " Could they find a girl and child,<br/>         No other signalment but girl and child?<br/>         No data shown, but noticeable eyes<br/>         And hair in masses, low upon the brow,<br/>         As if it were an iron crown and pressed?<br/>         Friends heighten, and suppose they specify<br/>         Why, girls with hair and eyes, are everywhere<br/>         In Paris, they had turned me up in vain<br/>         No Marian Erle indeed, but certainly Mathildes, Justines, Victoires,<br/>         or, if I sought<br/>         The English, Betsis, Saras, by the score<br/>         They might as well go out into the fields<br/>         To find a speckled bean, that's somehow specked,<br/>         And somewhere in the pod "—They left me so</p> |
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Shall I leave Marian ? have I dreamed  
a dream ?

—I thank God I have found her ! I  
must say

“ Thank God,” for finding her, al-  
though ’tis true

I find the world more sad and wicked  
for’t

But she—

I’ll write about her, presently,  
My hand’s a tremble as I had just  
caught up

My heart to write with in the place of  
it

At least you’d take these letters to be  
writ

At sea, in storm !—wait now  
A simple chance

Did all I could not sleep last night,  
and, tired

Of turning on my pillow and harder  
thoughts,

Went out at early morning, when the  
air

Is delicate with some last starry  
touch,

To wander through the Market-place  
of Flowers

(The prettiest haunt in Paris), and  
make sure

At worst, that there were roses in the  
world

So, wandering, musing, with the  
artist’s eye,

That keeps the shade-side of the thing  
it loves,

Half-absent, whole-observing, while  
the crowd

Of young vivacious and black-braided  
heads

Dipped, quick as finches in a blos-  
somed tree,

Among the nosegays, cheapening this  
and that

In such a cheerful twitter of rapid  
speech,—

My heart leapt in me, startled by a  
voice

That slowly, faintly, with long  
breaths that marked

The interval between the wish and  
word,

Inquired in stranger’s French,  
“ Would *that* be much,

That branch of flowering mountain-  
gorse ? ”—“ So much ?

Too much for me, then ! ” turning  
the face round

So close upon me, that I felt the sigh  
It turned with

“ Marian, Marian ! ”—face  
to face—

“ Marian ! I find you Shall I let  
you go ? ”

I held her two slight wrists with both  
my hands

“ Ah Marian, Marian, can I let you  
go ? ”

—She fluttered from me like a cycla-  
men,

As white, which, taken in a sudden  
wind,

Beats on against the palisade —“ Let  
pass,”

She said at last “ I will not,” I  
replied,

“ I lost my sister Marian many days,  
And sought her ever in my walks and  
prayers,

And, now I find her do we  
throw away

The bread we worked and prayed  
for,—crumble it

And drop it to do even so by  
thee

Whom still I’ve hungered after more  
than bread,

My sister Marian ?—can I hurt thee,  
dear ?

Then why distrust me ? Never  
tremble so

Come with me rather, where we’ll talk  
and live,

And none shall vex us I’ve a home  
for you

And me and no one else ”

She shook her head  
“ A home for you and me and no one  
else

Ill-suits one of us I prefer to such,  
A roof of grass on which a flower  
might spring,

Less costly to me than the cheapest  
here,

And yet I could not, at this hour,  
afford

A like home, even That you offer  
yours,

I thank you You are good as heaven  
itself—

As good as one I knew before  
 Farewell "  
 I loosed her hands—" In *his* name,  
 no farewell! "  
 (She stood as if I held her) " For  
*his* sake,  
 For *his* sake, Romney's! by the good  
 he meant,  
 Ay, always! by the love he pressed  
 for once,—  
 And by the grief, reproach, abandon-  
 ment,  
 He took in change "  
 "He, Romney! who grieved  
*him* "  
 Who had the heart for't? what re-  
 proach touch'd *him* "  
 Be merciful,—speak quickly "  
 "Therefore come,"  
 I answered with authority,—“I think  
 We dare to speak such things, and  
 name such names,  
 In the open squares of Paris! "  
 Not a word  
 She said, but, in a gentle humbled  
 way  
 (As one who had forgot herself in  
 grief),  
 Turned round and followed closely  
 where I went,  
 As if I led her by a narrow plank  
 Across devouring waters, step by  
 step,—  
 And so in silence we walked on a mile  
 And then she stopped her face was  
 white as wax  
 "We go much farther? "  
 "You are ill," I asked,  
 "Or tired? "  
 She looked the whiter for  
 her smile  
 "There's one at home," she said,  
 "has need of me  
 By this time,—and I must not let him  
 wait "  
 "Not even," I asked, "to hear of  
 Romney Leigh? "  
 "Not even," she said, "to hear of  
 Mister Leigh "  
 "In that case," I resumed, "I go  
 with you,  
 And we can talk the same thing there  
 as here  
 None waits for me I have my day to  
 spend "

Her lips moved in a spasm without a  
 sound,—  
 But then she spoke "It shall be as  
 you please,  
 And better so—'tis shorter seen than  
 told  
 And though you will not find me  
 worth your pains,  
 That even, may be worth some pains  
 to know,  
 For one as good as you are "  
 Then she led  
 The way, and I, as by a narrow plank  
 Across devouring waters, followed  
 her,  
 Stepping by her footsteps, breathing  
 by her breath,  
 And holding her with eyes that would  
 not slip,  
 And so, without a word, we walked a  
 mile,  
 And so, another mile, without a  
 word  
 Until the peopled streets being all dis-  
 missed,  
 House-rows and groups all scattered  
 like a flock,  
 The market-gardens thickened, and  
 the long  
 White walls beyond, like spiders' out-  
 side threads,  
 Stretched, feeling blindly toward the  
 country-fields  
 Through half-built habitations and  
 half dug  
 Foundations,—intervals of trenchant  
 chalk,  
 That bite betwixt the grassy uneven  
 turfs  
 Where goats (vine-tendrils trailing  
 from their mouths)  
 Stood perched on edges of the cellar  
 age  
 Which should be, staring as about to  
 leap  
 To find their coming Bacchus All  
 the place  
 Seemed less a cultivation than a  
 waste  
 Men work here, only,—scarce begin  
 to live  
 All's sad, the country struggling with  
 the town,  
 Like an untamed hawk upon a strong  
 man's fist,

That beats its wings and tries to get  
away,  
And cannot choose be satisfied so soon  
To hop through court-yards with its  
right foot tied,  
The vintage plains and pastoral hills  
in sight !

We stopped beside a house too high  
and slim  
To stand there by itself, but waiting  
till

Five others, two on this side, three on  
that,

Should grow up from the sullen second  
floor

They pause at now, to build it to a  
row

The upper windows partly were un-  
glazed

Meantime,—a meagre, unripe house  
a line

Of rigid poplars elbowed it behind,  
And, just in front, beyond the lime  
and bricks

That wronged the grass between it  
and the road,

A great acacia, with its slender trunk  
And overpoise of multitudinous leaves  
(In which a hundred fields might spill  
their dew

And intense verdure, yet find room  
enough),

Stood, reconciling all the place with  
green

I followed up the stair upon her step  
She hurried upward, shot across a  
face,

A woman's on the landing,—“ How  
now, now !

Is no one to have holidays but you ?  
You said an hour, and stay three  
hours, I think,

And Julie waiting for your betters  
here ?

Why if he had waked, he might have  
waked, for me ”

—Just murmuring an excusing word  
she passed

And shut the rest out with the cham-  
ber-door,

Myself shut in beside her

’Twas a room  
Scarce larger than a grave, and near  
as bare,

Two stools, a pallet-bed, I saw the  
room

A mouse could find no sort of shelter  
in’t,

Much less a greater secret, curtain-  
less,—

The window fixed you with its tortur-  
ing eye,

Defying you to take a step apart,  
If peradventure you would hide a  
thing

I saw the whole room, I and Marian  
there

Alone

Alone ? She threw her bonnet off,  
Then sighing as ’twere sighing the  
last time,

Approached the bed, and drew a  
shawl away

You could not peel a fruit you fear to  
bruise

More calmly and more carefully than  
so,—

Nor would you find within, a rosier  
flushed

Pomegranate

There he lay, upon his back,  
The yearling creature, warm and  
moist with life

To the bottom of his dimples,—to the  
ends

Of the lovely tumbled curls about his  
face,

For since he had been covered over-  
much

To keep him from the light glare,  
both his cheeks

Were hot and scarlet as the first live  
rose

The shepherd's heart-blood ebbed  
away into,

The faster for his love And love was  
here

As instant ! in the pretty baby-  
mouth,

Shut close as if for dreaming that it  
sucked,

The little naked feet drawn up the  
way

Of nestled birdlings, everything so  
soft

And tender,—to the little holdfast  
hands,

Which, closing on a finger into sleep,  
Had kept the mould of’t

While we stood there dumb,—

For oh, that it should take such innocence  
 To prove just guilt, I thought, and  
 stood there dumb,  
 The light upon his eyelids pricked  
 them wide,  
 And, staring out at us with all their  
 blue,  
 As half perplexed between the angel-  
 hood  
 He had been away to visit in his sleep,  
 And our most mortal presence,—grad-  
 ually  
 He saw his mother's face, accepting it  
 In change for heaven itself, with such  
 a smile  
 As might have well been learnt there,  
 —never moved,  
 But smiled on, in a drowse of ecstasy,  
 So happy (half with her and half with  
 heaven)  
 He could not have the trouble to be  
 stirred,  
 But smiled and lay there Like a  
 rose, I said  
 As red and still indeed as any rose,  
 That blows in all the silence of its  
 leaves,  
 Content, in blowing, to fulfil its life  
  
 She leaned above him (drinking him  
 as wine)  
 In that extremity of love, 'twill pass  
 For agony or rapture, seeing that  
 love  
 Includes the whole of nature, round-  
 ing it  
 To love no more,—since more  
 can never be  
 Than just love Self-forgot, cast out  
 of self,  
 And drowning in the transport of the  
 sight,  
 Her whole pale passionate face,  
 mouth, forehead, eyes,  
 One gaze, she stood ' then, slowly as  
 he smiled,  
 She smiled too, slowly, smiling una-  
 ware,  
 And drawing from his countenance  
 to hers  
 A fainter red, as if she watched a  
 flame  
 And stood in it a glow " How beau-  
 tiful,"  
 Said she

I answered, trying to be cold  
 (Must sin have compensations, was  
 my thought,  
 As if it were a holy thing like grief ?  
 And is a woman to be fooled aside  
 From putting vice down, with that  
 woman's toy,  
 A baby ?)—" Ay ! the child is well  
 enough,"  
 I answered " If his mother's palms  
 are clean,  
 They need be glad, of course, in clasp-  
 ing such  
 But if not,—I would rather lay my  
 hand,  
 Were I she,—on God's brazen altar-  
 bars  
 Red-hot with burning sacrificial  
 lambs,  
 Than touch the sacred curls of such a  
 child "

She plunged her fingers in his cluster-  
 ing locks,  
 As one who would not be afraid of  
 fire,  
 And then, with indrawn steady utter-  
 ance, said,—  
 " My lamb, my lamb ! although,  
 through such as thou,  
 The most unclean got courage and  
 approach  
 To God, once,—now they cannot,  
 even with men,  
 Find grace enough for pity and gentle  
 words "

" My Marian," I made answer, grave  
 and sad,  
 " The priest who stole a lamb to offer  
 him,  
 Was still a thief And if a woman  
 steals  
 (Through God's own barrier-hedges  
 of true love,  
 Which fence out licence in securing  
 love)  
 A child like this, that smiles so in her  
 face,  
 She is no mother, but a kidnapper,  
 And he's a dismal orphan not a  
 son,  
 Whom all her kisses cannot feed so  
 full  
 He will not miss hereafter a pure  
 home



To live in, a pure heart to lean against,  
 A pure good mother's name and  
     memory  
 To hope by, when the world grows  
     thick and bad,  
 And he feels out for virtue "  
     'Oh," she smiled  
 With bitler patience, "the child  
     takes his chance,—  
 Not much worse off in being father-  
     less  
 Than I was, fathered   He will say,  
     belike,  
 His mother was the saddest creature  
     born,  
 He'll say his mother lived so contrary  
 To joy, that even the kindest, seeing  
     her,  
 Grew sometimes almost cruel he'll  
     not say  
 She flew contrarious in the face of God  
 With bat wings of her vices   Stole  
     my child,—  
 My flower of earth, my only flower on  
     earth,  
 My sweet, my beauty!"   Up  
     she snatched the child,  
 And, breaking on him in a storm of  
     tears,  
 Drew out her long sobs from their  
     shivering roots,  
 Until he took it for a game, and  
     stretched  
 His feet, and flapped his eager arms  
     like wings,  
 And crowed and gurgled through his  
     infant laugh  
 "Mine, mine," she said, "I have as  
     sure a right  
 As any glad proud mother in the  
     world,  
 Who sets her darling down to cut his  
     teeth  
 Upon her church-ring   If she talks  
     of law,  
 I talk of law! I claim my mother-  
     dues  
 By law,—the law which now is para-  
     mount  
 The common law, by which the poor  
     and weak  
 Are trodden underfoot by vicious  
     men,  
 And loathed for ever after by the good  
 Let pass! I did not filch   I  
     found the child "

"You found him, Marian?"  
     "Av, I found him where  
 I found my curse,—in the gutter,  
     with my shame!  
 What have you, any of you, to say to  
     that,  
 Who all are happy, and sit safe and  
     high,  
 And never spoke before to arraign my  
     right  
 To grief itself? What, what  
     being beaten down  
 By hoofs of maddened oxen into a  
     ditch,  
 Half-dead, whole mangled   when  
     a girl, at last,  
 Breathes, sees   and finds there,  
     bedded in her flesh,  
 Because of the overcoming shock  
     perhaps,  
 Some coin of price!   and when a  
     good man comes  
 (That's God! the best men are not  
     quite as good)  
 And says, 'I dropped the coin there,  
     take it, you,  
 And keep it,—it shall pay you for  
     the loss,'—  
 You all put up your finger—' See the  
     thief!  
 Observe that precious thing she has  
     come to filch!  
 How bad those girls are!' Oh, my  
     flower, my pet,  
 I dare forget I have you in my arms,  
 And fly off to be angry with the world,  
 And fright you, hurt you with my  
     tempers, till  
 You double up your lip? Ah, that  
     indeed  
 Is bad a naughty mother!"  
     "You mistake,"  
 I interrupted, "if I loved you not,  
 I should not, Marian, certainly be  
     here"  
 "Alas," she said, "you are so very  
     good,  
 And yet I wish, indeed, you had never  
     come  
 To make me sob until I vex the child  
 It is not wholesome for these pleasure-  
     plats  
 To be so early watered by our brine  
 And then, who knows? he may not  
     like me now

As well, perhaps, as ere he saw me  
fret,—  
One's ugly fretting ! he has eyes the  
same  
As angels, but he cannot see as  
deep,  
And so I've kept for ever in his sight  
A sort of smile to please him,—as you  
place  
A green thing from the garden in a  
cup,  
To make believe it grows there Look,  
my sweet,  
My cowslip-ball ! we've done with  
that cross face,  
And here's the face come back you  
used to like  
Ah, ah ! he laughs ! he likes me Ah,  
Miss Leigh,  
You're great and pure, but were you  
purer still,—  
As if you had walked, we'll say, no  
otherwhere  
Than up and down the new Jerusa-  
lem,  
And held your trailing lute string up  
yourself  
From brushing the twelve stones, for  
fear of some  
Small speck as little as a needle-  
prick,  
White stitched on white,—the child  
would keep to me,  
Would choose his poor lost Marian,  
like me best,  
And, though you stretched your arms,  
cry back and cling,  
As we do, when God says it's time to  
die  
And bids us go up higher I leave us,  
then,  
We two are happy Does he push me  
off ?  
He's satisfied with me, as I with him "

" So soft to one, so hard to others !  
Nay,"  
I cried, more angry that she melted  
me,  
" We make henceforth a cushion of  
our faults  
To sit and practise easy virtues on ?  
I thought a child was given to sanctify  
A woman,—set her in the sight of all  
The clear-eyed Heavens, a chosen  
minister

To do their business and lead spirits  
up  
The difficult blue heights A woman  
lives,  
Not bettered, quickened toward the  
truth and good  
Through being a mother ? " then  
she's none ! although  
She damps her baby's cheeks by kiss-  
ing them,  
As we kill roses "

" Kill ! O Christ," she said,  
And turned her wild sad face from  
side to side  
With most despairing wonder in it—  
" What,  
What have you in your souls against  
me then,  
All of you ? am I wicked, do you  
think ?  
God knows me, trusts me with the  
child ! but you,  
You think me really wicked ? "

" Complaisant,"  
I answered softly, " to a wrong  
you've done,  
Because of certain profits,—which is  
wrong  
Beyond the first wrong, Marian.  
When you left  
The pure place and the noble heart, to  
take  
The hand of a seducer "

" Whom ? whose hand ?  
I took the hand of "  
Springing up erect,  
And lifting up the child at full arm's  
length,  
As if to bear him like an oriflamme  
Unconquerable to armies of re-  
proach,—  
" By him," she said, " my child's  
head and its curls,  
By those blue eyes no woman born  
could dare  
A perjury on, I make my mother's  
oath,  
That if I left that Heart, to lighten it,  
The blood of mine was still, except for  
grief !  
No cleaner maid than I was, took a  
step  
To a sadder end,—no matron-  
mother now  
Looks backward to her early maiden-  
hood

Through chaster pulses I speak  
 steadily  
 And if I lie so if, being fouled in  
 will  
 And paltered with in soul by devil's  
 lust,  
 I dared to bid this angel take my  
 part,  
 Would God sit quiet, let us think, in  
 heaven,  
 Nor strike me dumb with thunder ?  
 Yet I speak  
 He clears me therefore What, 'se-  
 duced' 's your word ?  
 Do wolves seduce a wandering fawn  
 in France ?  
 Do eagles, who have pinched a lamb  
 with claws,  
 Seduce it into carrion ? So with  
 me  
 I was not ever, as you say, seduced,  
 But simply, murdered "  
 There she paused, and sighed,  
 With such a sigh as drops from agony  
 To exhaustion,—sighing while she  
 let the babe  
 Slide down upon her bosom from her  
 arms,  
 And all her face's light fell after him,  
 Like a torch quenched in falling  
 Down she sank,  
 And sate upon the bedside with the  
 child  
 But I, convicted, broken utterly,  
 With woman's passion clung about  
 her waist,  
 And kissed her hair and eyes,—“ I  
 have been wrong,  
 Sweet Marian ” (weeping in a  
 tender rage)  
 “ Sweet holy Marian ! And now,  
 Marian, now,  
 I'll use your oath although my lips  
 are hard,  
 And by the child, my Marian, by the  
 child,  
 I'll swear his mother shall be innocent  
 Before my conscience, as in the open  
 Book  
 Of Him who reads for judgment  
 Innocent,  
 My sister ! let the night be ne'er so  
 dark,  
 The moon is surely somewhere in the  
 sky ,

So surely is your whiteness to be  
 found  
 Through all dark facts But pardon,  
 pardon me,  
 And smile a little, Marian,—for the  
 child,  
 If not for me, my sister ”  
 The poor lip  
 Just motioned for the smile and let it  
 go  
 And then, with scarce a stirring of the  
 mouth,  
 As if a statue spoke that could not  
 breathe,  
 But spoke on calm between its marble  
 lips,—  
 “ I'm glad, I'm very glad you clear  
 me so  
 I should be sorry that you set me  
 down  
 With harlots, or with even a better  
 name  
 Which misbecomes his mother For  
 the rest,  
 I am not on a level with your love,  
 Nor ever was, you know,—but now  
 am worse,  
 Because that world of yours has  
 dealt with me  
 As when the hard sea bites and chews  
 a stone  
 And changes the first form of it I've  
 marked  
 A shore of pebbles bitten to one shape  
 From all the various life of mad-  
 repores ,  
 And so, that little stone, called  
 Marian, Erle,  
 Picked up and dropped by you and  
 another friend,  
 Was ground and tortured by the in-  
 cessant sea  
 And bruised from what she was,—  
 changed ' death's a change,  
 And she I said, was murdered ,  
 Marian's dead  
 What can you do with people when  
 they are dead,  
 But, if you are pious, sing a hymn  
 and go,  
 Or, if you are tender, heave a sigh  
 and go,  
 But go by all means,—and permit  
 the grass  
 To keep its green feud up 'twixt them  
 and you ?

Then leave me,—let me rest I'm  
 dead, I say  
 And if, to save the child from death as  
 well,  
 The mother in me has survived the  
 rest,  
 Why, that's God's miracle you must  
 not tax —  
 I'm not less dead for that I'm  
 nothing more  
 But just a mother Only for the  
 child,  
 I'm warm, and cold, and hungry,  
 and afraid,  
 And smell the flowers a little, and see  
 the sun,  
 And speak still, and am silent,—just  
 for him !  
 I pray you therefore to mistake me  
 not  
 And treat me, haply, as I were  
 alive,  
 For though you ran a pm into my  
 soul,  
 I think it would not hurt nor trouble  
 me  
 Here's proof, dear lady,—in the  
 market-place  
 But now, you promised me to say a  
 word  
 About a friend, who once, long  
 years ago,  
 Took God's place toward me, when  
 He draws and loves  
 And does not thunder, whom  
 at last I left,  
 As all of us leave God You thought  
 perhaps,  
 I seemed to care for hearing of that  
 friend ?  
 Now, judge me ! we have sate here  
 half an hour  
 And talked together of the child and  
 me,  
 And I not asked as much as, 'What's  
 the thing  
 You had to tell me of the friend  
 the friend ?'  
 He's sad, I think you said,—he's sick,  
 perhaps ?  
 It's nought to Marian if he's sad or  
 sick  
 Another would have crawled beside  
 your foot  
 And prayed your words out Why, a  
 beast, a dog,

A starved cat, if he had fed it once  
 with milk,  
 Would show less hardness But I'm  
 dead, you see,  
 And that explains it "  
 Poor, poor thing, she spoke  
 And shook her head, as white and  
 calm as frost  
 On days too cold for raining any  
 more,  
 But still with such a face, so much  
 alive,  
 I could not choose but take it on my  
 arm  
 And stroke the placid patience of its  
 cheeks,—  
 Then told my story out, of Romney  
 Leigh,  
 How, having lost her, sought her,  
 missed her still,  
 He, broken-hearted for himself and  
 her,  
 Had drawn the curtains of the world  
 awhile  
 As if he had done with morning  
 There I stopped,  
 For when she gasped, and pressed me  
 with her eyes,  
 "And now how is it with him ?  
 tell me now,"—  
 I felt the shame of compensated grief,  
 And chose my words with scruple—  
 slowly stepped  
 Upon the slippery stones set here and  
 there  
 Across the sliding water "Cer-  
 tainly,  
 As evening empties morning into  
 night,  
 Another morning takes the evening up  
 With healthful, providential inter-  
 change,  
 And, though he thought still—of her,"  
 "Yes, she knew,  
 She understood she had supposed,  
 indeed,  
 That, as one stops a hole upon a flute,  
 At which a new note comes and  
 shapes the tune,  
 Excluding her would bring a worthier  
 in,  
 And, long ere this, that Lady Walde-  
 mar  
 He loved so "  
 "Loved," I started,—"loved  
 her so !

Now tell me "

" I will tell you " she replied  
 " But since we're taking oaths, you'll  
 promise first

That he in England, he, shall never  
 learn

In what a dreadful trap his creature  
 here,

Round whose unworthy neck he had  
 meant to tie

The honourable ribbon of his name,  
 Fell unware, and came to butchery

Because—I know him,—as he takes  
 to heart

The grief of every stranger, he's not  
 like

To banish mine as far as I should  
 choose

In wishing him most happy Now he  
 leaves

To think of me perverse, who went  
 my way

Unkind, and left him,—but if once he  
 knew

Ah then, the sharp nail of my cruel  
 wrong

Would fasten me for ever in his sight  
 Like some poor curious bird, through

each spread wing  
 Nailed high up over a fierce hunter's

fire,  
 To spoil the dinner of all tenderer folk

Come in by chance Nay, since your  
 Marian's dead

You shall not hang her up, but dig a  
 hole

And bury her in silence ! ring no  
 bells "

I answered gaily, though my whole  
 voice wept,

" We'll ring the joy-bells, not the  
 funeral-bells,

Because we have her back, dead or  
 alive "

She never answered that, but shook  
 her head,

Then low and calm, as one who, safe  
 in heaven

Shall tell a story of his lower life,  
 Unmoved by shame or anger,—so she

spoke  
 She told me she had loved upon her

knees  
 As others pray, more perfectly ab-

sorbed

In the act and aspiration She felt  
 his

For just his uses, not her own at  
 all,

His stool, to sit on, or put up his foot,  
 His cup, to fill with wine or vinegar,

Whichever drink might please him at  
 the chance

For that should please her always  
 let him write

His name upon her it seemed  
 natural,

It was most precious, standing on his  
 shelf

To wait until he chose to lift his hand  
 Well well,—I saw her then, and must

have seen  
 How bright her life went, floating on

her love,  
 Like wicks the housewives send afloat

on oil,  
 Which feeds them to a flame that

lasts the night

To do good seemed so much his  
 business,

That, having done it, she was fain to  
 think,

Must fill up his capacity for joy  
 At first she never mooted with

herself  
 If he was happy, since he made her so,

Or if he loved her, being so much  
 beloved

Who thinks of asking if the sun is  
 light,

Observing that it lightens ? who's so  
 bold,

To question God of His felicity ?  
 Still less And thus she took for

granted first,  
 What first of all she should have put

to proof,  
 And sinned against him so, but only

so  
 " What could you hope," she said

" of such as she ?  
 You take a kid you like, and turn n

out  
 In some fair garden, though the

creature's fond  
 And gentle, it will leap upon the beds

And break your tulips, bite you  
 tender trees

The wonder would be if such inno-  
 cence

Spoiled less A garden is no place  
for kids "

And, by degrees, when he who had  
chosen her,

Brought in his courteous and benig-  
nant friends

To spend their goodness on her which  
she took

So very gladly as a part of his —

By slow degrees, it broke on her slow  
sense,

That she, too, in that Eden of de-  
light

Was out of place, and, like the silly  
kid,

Still did most mischief where she  
meant most love

A thought enough to make a woman  
mad

(No beast in this, but she may well go  
mad)

That saying " I am thine to love and  
use,"

May blow the plague in her protesting  
breath

To the very man for whom she claims  
to die,—

That, clinging round his neck, she  
pulls him down

And drowns him,—and that lavish  
ing her soul

She hales perdition on him " So,  
being mad,"

Said Marian

" Ah—who stirred such  
thoughts, you ask ?

Whose fault it was, that she should  
have such thoughts ?

None's fault, none's fault The light  
comes, and we see

But if it were not truly for our eyes,  
There would be nothing seen, for all  
the light,

And so with Marian If she saw at  
last

The sense was in her,—Lady Walde-  
mar

Had spoken all in vain else "

" O my heart,  
O prophet in my heart," I cried aloud,

" Then Lady Waldemar spoke ! "

" Did she speak,"

Mused Marian softly—" or did she  
only sign ?

Or did she put a word into her face

And look, and so impress you with the  
word ?

Or leave it in the foldings of her gown  
Like rosemary smells, a movement  
will shake out

When no one's conscious ? who shall  
say, or guess ?

Nothing alone was certain,—from the  
day

The gracious lady paid a visit first,  
She, Marian, saw things different,—  
felt distrust

Of all that sheltering roof of circum-  
stance

Her hopes were building into with  
clay nests

Her heart was restless, pacing up and  
down

And fluttering, like dumb creatures  
before storms

Not knowing wherefore she was ill at  
ease "

" And still the lady came," said  
Marian Erle,

" Much oftener than he knew it  
Mister Leigh

She bade me never tell him that she  
had come

She liked to love me better than he  
knew,

So very kind was Lady Waldemar  
And every time she brought with her  
more light,

And every light made sorrow clearer  
Well,

Ah, well ! we cannot give her blame  
for that,

'Twould be the same thing if an angel  
came,

Whose right should prove our wrong  
And every time

The lady came, she looked more  
beautiful,

And spoke more like a flute among  
green trees,

Until at last, as one, whose heart  
being sad

On hearing lovely music, suddenly  
Dissolves in weeping, I brake out in  
tears

Before her asked her counsel  
' had I erred

In being too happy ? would she set  
me straight ?

For she, being wise and good and  
 born above  
 The flats I had never climbed from,  
 could perceive  
 If such as I, might grow upon the  
 hills,  
 And whether such poor herb  
 sufficed to grow  
 For Romney Leigh to break his fast  
 upon't,—  
 Or would he pine on such, or haply  
 starve ?  
 She wrapt me in her generous arms at  
 once,  
 And let me dream a moment how it  
 feels  
 To have a real mother, like some  
 girls  
 But when I looked, her face was  
 younger ay,  
 Youth's too bright not to be a little  
 hard  
 And beauty keeps itself still upper-  
 most,  
 That's true !—Though Lady Walde-  
 mar was kind,  
 She hurt me, hurt, as if the morning  
 sun  
 Should smite us on the eyelids when  
 we sleep,  
 And wake us up with headache Ay,  
 and soon  
 Was light enough to make my heart  
 ache too  
 She told me truths I asked for  
 'twas my fault  
 ' That Romney could not love me, if  
 he would,  
 As men call loving, there are bloods  
 that flow  
 Together, like some rivers, and not  
 mix,  
 Through contraries of nature He  
 indeed  
 Was set to wed me, to espouse my  
 class,  
 Act out a rash opinion,—and, once  
 wed  
 So just a man and gentle, could not  
 choose  
 But make my life as smooth as  
 marriage-ring,  
 Bespeak me mildly, keep me a  
 cheerful house,  
 With servants, brooches, all the  
 flowers I liked,

And pretty dresses, silk the whole  
 year round'  
 At which I stopped her,—' This for  
 me And now  
 ' For him '—She murmured,—truth  
 grew difficult,  
 She owned, ' 'Twas plain a man like  
 Romney Leigh  
 Required a wife more level to him  
 self  
 If day by day he had to bend his  
 height  
 To pick up sympathies, opinions,  
 thoughts  
 And interchange the common talk  
 of life  
 Which helps a man to live as well as  
 talk,  
 His days were heavily taxed  
 Who buys a staff  
 To fit the hand, that reaches but the  
 knee ?  
 He'd feel it better to be forced to  
 miss  
 The perfect joy of married suited  
 pairs,  
 Who, bursting through the separat-  
 ing hedge  
 Of personal dues with that sweet  
 eglantine  
 Of equal love, keep saying, " So we  
 think  
 " It strikes us,—that's *our* fancy " "  
 —When I asked  
 If earnest will, devoted love, em-  
 ployed  
 In youth like mine, would fail to raise  
 me up,—  
 As two strong arms will always raise a  
 child  
 To a fruit hung overhead ? she sighed  
 and sighed  
 ' That could not be,' she feared  
 ' You take a pink,  
 You dig about its roots and water  
 it,  
 And so improve it to a garden-pink,  
 But will not change it to a heliotrope,  
 The kind remains And then, the  
 harder truth—  
 This Romney Leigh, so rash to leap  
 a pale,  
 So bold for conscience, quick for  
 martyrdom,  
 Would suffer steadily and never  
 flinch,

But suffer surely and keenly, when  
 his class  
 Turned shoulder on him for a shameful match,  
 And set him up as nine-pin in their talk,  
 To bowl him down with jestings '—  
 There, she paused,  
 And when I used the pause in doubting that  
 We wronged him after all in what we feared—  
 Suppose such things should never touch him, more  
 In his high conscience (if the things should be),  
 Than, when the queen sits in an upper room  
 The horses in the street can spatter her '—  
 A moment, hope came—but the lady closed  
 That door and nicked the lock, and shut it out,  
 Observing wisely that, 'the tender heart  
 Which made him over-soft to a lower class,  
 Could scarcely fail to make him sensitive  
 To a higher—how they thought, and what they felt'

"Alas, alas," said Marian, rocking slow  
 The pretty baby who was near asleep  
 The eyelids creeping over the blue balls—  
 "She made it clear, too clear—I saw the whole!  
 And yet who knows if I had seen my way  
 Straight out of it, by looking though 'twas clear,  
 Unless the generous lady, 'ware of ths,  
 Had set her own house all a-fire for me,  
 To light me forwards? Leaning on my face  
 Her heavy agate eyes which crushed my will,  
 She told me tenderly (as when men come  
 To a bedside to tell people they must die),

'She knew of knowledge,—ay of knowledge, knew,  
 That Romney Leigh had loved *her* formerly,  
 And *she* loved *him*, she might say, now the chance  
 Was past but that, of course, he never guessed,—  
 For something came between them something thin  
 As a cobweb catching every fly of doubt  
 To hold it buzzing at the window-pane  
 And help to dim the daylight Ah, man's pride  
 Or woman's—which is greatest? most averse  
 To brushing cobwebs? Well, but she and he  
 Remained fast friends, it seemed not more than so  
 Because he had bound his hands and could not stir  
 An honourable man, if somewhat rash,  
 And she not even for Romney would she spill  
 A blot as little even as a tear  
 Upon his marriage-contract,—not to gain  
 A better joy for two than came by that!  
 For, though I stood between her heart and heaven,  
 She loved me wholly'"

Did I laugh or curse?  
 I think I sate there silent, hearing all  
 Ay, hearing double,—Marian's tale, at once,  
 And Romney's marriage-vow, "I'll keep to THEE,"  
 Which means that woman-serpent Is it time  
 For church now?  
 "Lady Waldemar spoke more,"  
 Continued Marian, "but, as when a soul  
 Will pass out through the sweetness of a song  
 Beyond it, voyaging the uphill road,—  
 Even so, mine wandered from the things I heard,  
 To those I suffered It was afterward  
 I shaped the resolution to the act



For many hours we talked What  
 need to talk ?  
 The fate was clear and close, it  
 touched my eyes,  
 But still the generous lady tried to  
 keep  
 The case afloat, and would not let it  
 go  
 And argued, struggled upon Marian's  
 side,  
 Which was not Romney's ! though  
 she little knew  
 What ugly monster would take up  
 the end,—  
 What gripping death within the drown-  
 ing death  
 Was ready to complete my sum of  
 death "

I thought,—Perhaps he's sliding now  
 the ring  
 Upon that woman's finger  
 She went on  
 " The lady, failing to prevail her way  
 Upgathered my torn wishes from the  
 ground  
 And pieced them with her strong  
 benevolence,  
 And, as I thought I could breathe freer  
 air  
 Away from England, going without  
 pause,  
 Without farewell,—just breaking with  
 a jerk  
 The blossomed offshoot from my  
 thorny life,—  
 She promised kindly to provide the  
 means,  
 With instant passage to the colonies  
 And full protection,—' would commit  
 me straight  
 To one who once had been her wait-  
 ing-maid  
 And had the customs of the world,  
 intent  
 On changing England for Australia  
 Herself, to carry out her fortune  
 so  
 For which I thanked the Lady Walde-  
 mar,  
 As men upon their death-beds thank  
 last friends  
 Who lay the pillow straight it is  
 not much,  
 And yet 'tis all of which they are  
 capable,

This lying smoothly in a bed to die  
 And so 'twas fixed,—and so, from  
 day to day,  
 The woman named, came in to visit  
 me "

Just then, the girl stopped speaking,  
 —sate erect,  
 And stared at me as if I had been a  
 ghost  
 (Perhaps I looked as white as any  
 ghost)  
 With large-eved horror " Does God  
 make," she said  
 " All sorts of creatures, really, do you  
 think ?  
 Or is it that the Devil slavers them  
 So excellently, that we come to doubt  
 Who's strongest, He who makes, or  
 he who mars ?  
 I never liked the woman's face, or  
 voice,  
 Or ways it made me blush to look  
 at her,  
 It made me tremble if she touched  
 my hand,  
 And when she spoke a fondling word,  
 I shrank  
 As if one hated me, who had power to  
 hurt,  
 And, every time she came, my veins  
 ran cold,  
 As somebody were walking on my  
 grave  
 At last I spoke to Lady Waldemar  
 ' Could such an one be good to trust ?  
 I asked  
 Whereat the lady stroked my cheek  
 and laughed  
 Her silver-laugh (one must be born  
 to laugh,  
 To put such music in it)—' Foolish  
 girl,  
 Your scattered wits are gathering  
 wool beyond  
 The sheep-walk reaches !—leave the  
 thing to me '  
 And therefore, half in trust, and  
 half in scorn  
 That I had heart still for another  
 fear  
 In such a safe despair, I left the thing  
 " The rest is short I was obedient  
 I wrote my letter which delivered  
 him  
 From Marian, to his own prosperities,

|                                                                                    |                                                   |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------|
| And followed that bad guide The lady ?—hush,—                                      | To go down with one's soul into the grave—        |
| I never blame the lady Ladies who Sit high, however willing to look down,          | To go down half dead, half alive, I say,          |
| Will scarce see lower than their dainty feet                                       | And wake up with corruption, cheek to cheek       |
| And Lady Waldemar saw less than I, With what a Devil's daughter I went forth       | With him who stunks since Friday ' There it is    |
| The swine's road, headlong over a precipice,                                       | And that's the horror of 't, Miss Leigh           |
| In such a curl of hell-foam caught and choked,                                     | “ You feel ?                                      |
| No shriek of soul in anguish could pierce through                                  | You understand ?—no, do not look at me            |
| To fetch some help They say there's help in heaven                                 | But understand The blank, blind, weary way        |
| For all such cries But if one cries from hell                                      | Which led where'er it led away, at least,         |
| What then ?—the heavens are deaf upon that side                                    | The shifted ship to Sydney or to France           |
|                                                                                    | Still bound, 'wherever else, to another land,     |
|                                                                                    | The swooning sickness on the dismal sea,          |
|                                                                                    | The foreign shore, the shameful house, the night, |
| “ A woman hear me,—let me make it plain,—                                          | The feeble blood, the heavy-headed grief,         |
| A woman not a monster both her breasts                                             | No need to bring their damnable drugged cup,      |
| Made right to suckle babes she took me off,                                        | And yet they brought it! Hell's so prodigal       |
| A woman also, young and ignorant, And heavy with my grief, my two poor eyes        | Of devil's gifts hunts liberally in packs         |
| Near washed away with weeping, till the trees,                                     | Will kill no poor small creature of the wilds     |
| The blessed unaccustomed trees and fields,                                         | But fifty red wide throats must smoke at it,—     |
| Ran either side the train, like stranger dogs                                      | As his at me when waking up at last               |
| Unworthy of any notice,—took me off,                                               | I told you that I waked up in the grave           |
| So dull, so blind, and only half alive, Not seeing by what road, nor by what ship, | “ Enough so!—it is plain enough so True,          |
| Nor toward what place, nor to what end of all—                                     | We wretches cannot tell out all our wrong,        |
| Men carry a corpse thus,—past the doorway past                                     | Without offence to decent happy folk              |
| The garden-gate, the children's playground, up                                     | I know that we must scrupulously hunt             |
| The green lane,—then they leave it in the pit,                                     | With half-words, delicate reserves, the thing     |
| To sleep and find corruption, cheek to cheek                                       | Which no one scrupled we should feel in full      |
| With him who stunks since Friday                                                   | Let pass the rest, then, only leave my oath       |
| “ But suppose,                                                                     | Upon this sleeping child,—man's violence,         |

Not man's seduction, made me what  
 I am,  
 As lost as I told *him* I should  
 be lost,  
 When mothers fail us, can we help  
 ourselves?  
 That's fatal!—And you call it being  
 lost,  
 That down came next day's noon  
 and caught me there  
 Half gibbering and half raving on the  
 floor  
 And wondering what had happened  
 up in heav'n,  
 That suns should dare to shine when  
 God Himself  
 Was certainly abolished  
 "I was mad,—  
 How many weeks, I know not,—  
 many weeks  
 I think they let me go, when I was  
 mad  
 They feared my eyes and loosed me,  
 as boys might  
 A mad dog which they had tortured  
 Up and down  
 I went by road and village, over tracts  
 Of open foreign country, large and  
 strange,  
 Crossed everywhere by long thin  
 poplar lines  
 Like fingers of some ghastly skeleton  
 Hand  
 Through sunlight and through moon-  
 light evermore  
 Pushed out from hell itself to pluck  
 me back,  
 And resolute to get me, slow and  
 sure,  
 While every roadside Christ upon his  
 cross  
 Hung reddening through his gory  
 wounds at me  
 And shook his nails in anger, and  
 came down  
 To follow a mile after, wading up  
 The low vines and green wheat, cry-  
 ing 'Take the girl!  
 She's none of mine from hence-  
 forth' Then, I knew  
 (But this is somewhat dimmer than  
 the rest)  
 The charitable peasants gave me  
 bread  
 And leave to sleep in straw and  
 twice they tied,

At parting, Mary's image round my  
 neck—  
 How heavy it seemed 'as heavy as a  
 stone,  
 A woman has been strangled with less  
 weight  
 I threw it in a ditch to keep it clean  
 And ease my breath a little when  
 none looked,  
 I did not need such safeguards —  
 brutal men  
 Stopped short, Miss Leigh in insult,  
 when they had seen  
 My face—I must have had an awful  
 look  
 And so I lived the weeks passed on,  
 —I lived  
 'Twas living my old tramp-life o'er  
 again  
 But this time, in a dream, and hunted  
 round  
 By some prodigious Dream-fear at my  
 back  
 Which ended yet my brain cleared  
 presently  
 And there I sate, one evening by the  
 road  
 I Marian Erle, myself alone, undone,  
 Facing a sunset low upon the flats,  
 As if it were the finish of all time —  
 The great red stone upon my sepul-  
 chre,  
 Which angels were too weak to roll  
 away

## SEVENTH BOOK

"THE woman's motive" shall we  
 daub ourselves  
 With finding roots for nettles? 'tis  
 soft clay  
 And easily explored She had the  
 means,  
 The monies, by the lady's liberal  
 grace,  
 In trust for that Australian scheme  
 and me  
 Which so, that she might clutch with  
 both her hands  
 And chunk to her naughty uses undis-  
 turbed,  
 She served me (after all it was not  
 strange,  
 'Twas only what my mother would  
 have done)  
 A motherly, unmerciful, good turn

" Well, after There are nettles everywhere,  
But smooth green grasses are more common still,  
The blue of heaven is larger than the cloud,  
A miller's wife at Clichy took me in  
And spent her pity on me,—made me calm  
And merely very reasonably sad  
She found me a servant's place in Paris where  
I tried to take the cast-off life again,  
And stood as quiet as a beaten ass  
Who, having fallen through overloads, stands up  
To let them charge him with another pack

" A few months so My mistress,  
young and light,  
Was easy with me, less for kindness than  
Because she led, herself, an easy time  
Betwixt her lover and her looking-glass,  
Scarce knowing which way she was praised the most  
She felt so pretty and so pleased all day  
She could not take the trouble to be cross,  
But, sometimes, as I stooped to tie her shoe,  
Would tap me softly with her slender foot  
Still restless with the last night's dancing in't,  
And say, 'Fie, pale-face' are you English girls  
All grave and silent? mass-book still and Lent?  
And first-communion colours on your cheeks  
Worn past the time for't? little fool, be gay!'—  
At which she vanished, like a fairy, through  
A gap of silver laughter  
" Came an hour  
When all went otherwise She did not speak  
But clenched her brows, and clipped me with her eyes  
As if a viper with a pair of tongs,

Too far for any touch, yet near enough  
To view the writhing creature,—then at last,  
' Stand still there, in the holy Virgin's name  
Thou Marian, thou'rt no reputable girl,  
Although sufficient dull for twenty saints!  
I think thou mock'st me and my house ' she said,  
Confess thou'lt be a mother in a month,  
Thou mask of saintship '  
" Could I answer her?  
The light broke in so it meant *that* then, *that* ?  
I had not thought of that, in all my thoughts,—  
Through all the cold, numb aching of my brow,  
Through all the heaving of impatient life  
Which threw me on death at intervals —through all  
The upbreak of the fountains of my heart  
The rains had swelled too large it could mean *that* ?  
Did God make mothers out of victims, then,  
And set such pure amens to hideous deeds ?  
Why not ? He overblows an ugly grave  
With violets which blossom in the spring  
And *I* could be a mother in a month !  
I hope it was not wicked to be glad  
I lifted up my voice and wept, and laughed,  
To heaven, not her, until it tore my throat  
' Confess, confess ! ' what was there to confess,  
Except man's cruelty, except my wrong ?  
Except this anguish, or this ecstasy ?  
This shame, or glory ? The light woman there  
Was small to take it in an acorn-cup  
Would take the sea in sooner  
" ' Good,' she cried,  
' Unmarried and a mother, and she laughs !

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| These unchaste girls are always<br>impudent<br>Get out, intriguer! leave my house,<br>and trot<br>I wonder you should look me in the<br>face,<br>With such a filthy secret '<br>"Then I rolled<br>My scanty bundle up, and went my<br>way<br>Washed white with weeping, shud-<br>dering head and foot<br>With blind hysteric passion, stagger-<br>ing forth<br>Beyond those doors 'Twas natural,<br>of course,<br>She should not ask me where I meant<br>to sleep,<br>I might sleep well beneath the heavy<br>Sene,<br>Like others of my sort, the bed was<br>laid<br>For us But any woman, womanly,<br>Had thought of him who should be in<br>a month,<br>The sinless babe that should be in a<br>month,<br>And if by chance he might be warmer<br>housed<br>Than underneath such dreary, drip-<br>ping eaves " | As any stronger stuff might For my<br>part,<br>I'd rather take the wind-side of the<br>stews<br>Than touch such women with my<br>finger-end '<br>They top the poor street-walker by<br>their le,<br>And look the better for being so much<br>worse<br>The devil's most devilish when re-<br>spectable<br>But you dear, and your story "<br>"All the rest<br>Is here " she said, and signed upon<br>the child<br>"I found a mistress-sempstress who<br>was kind<br>And let me sew in peace among her<br>girls,<br>And what was better than to draw the<br>threads<br>All day and half the night, for him,<br>and him '<br>And so I lived for him and so he lives<br>And so I know, by this time, God lives<br>too "<br>She smiled beyond the sun, and ended<br>so<br>And all my soul rose up to take her<br>part<br>Against the world's successes, virtues,<br>fames<br>"Come with me, sweetest sister," I<br>returned,<br>"And sit within my house, and do me<br>good<br>From henceforth, thou and thine 'I ye<br>are my own<br>From henceforth I am lonely in the<br>world,<br>And thou art lonely, and the child is<br>half<br>An orphan Come,—and, henceforth,<br>thou and I<br>Being still together, will not miss a<br>friend,<br>Nor he a father, since two mothers<br>shall<br>Make that up to him I am journeying<br>south,<br>And in my Tuscan home I'll find a<br>niche,<br>And set thee there, my saint, the child<br>and thee, |
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And burn the lights of love before thy  
face,  
And ever at thy sweet look cross my-  
self  
From mixing with the world's prosper-  
ities,  
That so, in gravity and holy calm  
We two may live on toward the truer  
life "

She looked me in the face and an-  
swered not,  
Nor signed she was unworthy, nor  
gave thanks,  
But took the sleeping child and held it  
out

To meet my kiss, as if requiting me  
And trusting me at once And thus,  
at once,

I carried him and her to where I lived,  
She's there now, in the little room,  
asleep,

I hear the soft child-breathing through  
the door,  
And all three of us, at to-morrow's  
break,

Pass onward, homeward, to our Italy  
Oh, Romney Leigh, I have your debts  
to pay,  
And I'll be just and pay them

But yourself !  
To pay your debts is scarcely difficult,  
To buy your life is nearly impossible  
Being sold away to Lamia My head  
aches,

I cannot see my road along this dark,  
Nor can I creep and grope, as fits the  
dark,

For these foot-catching robes of  
womanhood

A man might walk a little but I !  
—He loves

The Lamia-woman,—and I, write to  
him

What stops his marriage, and destroys  
his peace,—

Or what, perhaps, shall simply trouble  
him,

Until she only need to touch his sleeve  
With just a finger's tremulous white  
flame,

Saying, " Ah,—Aurora Leigh ! a  
pretty tale,

A very pretty poet ! I can guess  
The motive "—then, to catch his eyes  
in hers,

And vow she does not wonder,—and  
they two

To break in laughter, as the sea along  
A melancholy coast, and float up  
higher,

In such a laugh, their fatal weeds of  
love !

Ay, fatal, ay And who shall answer  
me

Fate has not hurried tides, and if  
to-night

My letter would not be a night too  
late,—

An arrow shot into a man that's dead  
To prove a vain intention ? Would I  
show

The new wife vile, to make the hus-  
band mad ?

No, Lamia ! shut the shutters, bar the  
doors

From every glimmer on thy serpent-  
skin !

I will not let thy hideous secret out  
To agonise the man I love—I mean  
The friend I love as friends love

It is strange,  
To-day while Marian told her story,  
like

To absorb most listeners, how I lis-  
tened chief

To a voice not hers, nor yet that  
enemy's

Nor God's in wrath but one  
that mixed with mine

Long years ago, among the garden-  
trees,

And said to me, to me too, " Be my  
wife,

Aurora ! " It is strange, with what a  
swell

Of yearning passion, as a snow of  
ghosts

Might beat against the impervious  
doors of heaven,

I thought, " Now, if I had been a  
woman, such

As God made women, to save men by  
love,—

By just my love I might have saved  
this man,

And made a nobler poem for the  
world

Than all I have failed in " But I  
failed besides

In this, and now he's lost ! through  
me alone !

And, by my only fault, his empty  
     house  
 Sucks in, at this same hour, a wind  
     from hell  
 To keep his hearth cold, make his  
     casements creak  
 For ever to the tune of plague and sin—  
 O Romney, O my Romney, O my  
     friend !  
 My cousin and friend ! my helper,  
     when I would,  
 My love, that might be ! mine !  
     Why, how one weeps  
 When one's too weary ! Were a wit-  
     ness by,  
 He'd say some folly           that I loved  
     the man,  
 Who knows ?           and make me laugh  
     again for scorn  
 At strongest, women are as weak in  
     flesh,  
 As men, at weakest, vilest, are in soul  
 So, hard for women to keep pace with  
     men !  
 As well give up at once, sit down at  
     once,  
 And weep as I do   Tears, tears !  
     why we weep ?  
 'Tis worth inquiry ?—That we've  
     shamed a life,  
 Or lost a love, or missed a world,  
     perhaps ?  
 By no means   Simply, that we've  
     walked too far,  
 Or talked too much, or felt the wind  
     i' the east,—  
 And so we weep as if both body and  
     soul  
 Broke up in water—this way  
     Poor mixed rags  
 Forsooth we're made of, like those  
     other dolls  
 That lean with pretty faces into fairs  
 It seems as if I had a man in me,  
 Despising such a woman  
     Yet indeed,  
 To see a wrong or suffering moves us  
     all  
 To undo it, though we should undo  
     ourselves,  
 Ay, all the more, that we undo our-  
     selves,  
 That's womanly, past doubt, and not  
     ill-moved  
 A natural movement, therefore, on  
     my part,  
 To fill the chair up of my cousin's  
     wife,  
 And save him from a devil's company !  
 We're all so,—made so—'tis our  
     woman's trade  
 To suffer torment for another's ease  
 The world's male chivalry has perished  
     out,  
 But women are knights-errant to the  
     last,  
 And, if Cervantes had been greater  
     still,  
 He had made his Don a Donna  
     So it clears  
 And so we rain our skies blue  
     Put away  
 This weakness   If, as I have just now  
     said,  
 A man's within me,—let him act him-  
     self,  
 Ignoring the poor conscious trouble of  
     blood  
 That's called the woman merely   I  
     will write  
 Plain words to England,—if too late,  
     too late,—  
 If ill-accounted, then accounted ill,  
 We'll trust the heavens with some-  
     thing  
     “ Dear Lord Howe,  
 You'll find a story on another leaf  
 That's Marian Erle's,—what noble  
     friend of yours  
 She trusted once through what flagi-  
     tious means  
 To what disastrous ends,—the story's  
     true  
 I found her wandering on the Paris  
     quays,  
 A babe upon her breast—unnatural  
 Unseasonable outcast on such snows  
 Unthawed to this time   I will tax in  
     this  
 Your friendship, friend,—if that con-  
     victed She  
 Be not his wife yet, to denounce the  
     facts  
 To himself—but, otherwise, to let  
     them pass  
 On tip-toe like escaping murderers,  
 And tell my cousin merely—Marian  
     lives,  
 Is found and finds her home with  
     such a friend,  
 Myself, Aurora   Which good news,  
     ‘ She's found,’

Will help to make him merry in his  
love  
I send it, tell him, for my marriage  
gift  
As good as orange-water for the  
nerves,  
Or perfumed gloves for headache,—  
though aware  
That he, except of love, is scarcely  
sick,  
I mean the new love this time  
since last year  
Such quick forgetting on the part of  
men !  
Is any shrewder trick upon the cards  
To enrich them ? pray instruct me  
how it's done  
First, clubs,—and while you look at  
clubs, it's spades,  
That's prodigy The lightning strikes  
a man,  
And when we think to find him dead  
and charred  
Why there he is on a sudden, playing  
pipes  
Beneath the splintered elm-tree !  
Crime and shame  
And all their hoggerly trample your  
smooth world,  
Nor leave more foot-marks than  
Apollo's kine,  
Whose hoofs were muffled by the  
thieving god  
In tamarisk-leaves and myrtle I'm  
so sad,  
So weary and sad to-night, I'm some-  
what sour —  
Forgive me To be blue and shrewd  
at once,  
Exceeds all toleration except yours  
But yours, I know, is infinite Fare-  
well  
To-morrow we take train for Italy  
Speak gently of me to your gracious  
wife,  
As one however far, shall yet be near  
in loving wishes to your house " I sign  
And now I'll loose my heart upon a  
page,  
This—  
" Lady Waldemar, I'm very glad  
I never liked you, which you knew  
so well,  
You spared me, in your turn, to like  
me much

Your liking surely had done worse for  
me  
Than has your loathing, though the  
last appears  
Sufficiently unscrupulous to hurt,  
And not afraid of judgment Now  
there's peace  
Between our faces,—I stand off, as if  
I judged a stranger's portrait and  
pronounced  
Indifferently the type was good or  
bad  
What matter to me that the lines are  
false  
I ask you ? Did I ever ink my lips  
By drawing your name through them  
as a friend's  
Or touch your hands as lovers do ?  
thank God  
I never did and, since you're proved  
so vile,  
Ay, vile, I say,—we'll show it pre-  
sently —  
I'm not obliged to nurse my friend in  
you,  
Or wash out my own blots, in counting  
yours,  
Or even excuse myself to honest souls  
Who seek to touch my lip or clasp my  
palm,—  
' Alas, but Lady Waldemar came  
first ! '  
" 'Tis true by this time, you may  
near me so  
That you're my cousin's wife You've  
gambled deep  
As Lucifer, and won the morning-star  
In that case,—and the noble house of  
Leigh  
Must henceforth with its good roof  
shelter you  
I cannot speak and burn you up  
between  
Those rafters, I who am born a Leigh,  
—nor speak  
And pierce your breast through  
Romney's, I who live  
His friend and cousin !—so, you are  
safe You two  
Must grow together like the tares and  
wheat  
Till God's great fire —But make the  
best of time  
" And hide this letter ! let it speak  
no more



|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
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| Than I shall, how you tricked poor<br>Marian Erle,<br>And set her own love digging her own<br>grave<br>Within her green hope's pretty garden-ground<br>Ay, sent her forth with some one of<br>your sort<br>To a wicked house in France,—from<br>which she fled<br>With curses in her eyes and ears and<br>throat,<br>Her whole soul choked with curses,—<br>mad, in short,<br>And madly scouring up and down for<br>weeks<br>The foreign hedgeless country, lone<br>and lost,—<br>So innocent, male-fiends might slink<br>within<br>Remote hell-corners, seeing her so<br>defiled !                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 | I spare you common curses<br>“ Ponder this<br>Leigh<br>(For which inheritance beyond your<br>birth<br>You sold that poisonous porridge<br>called your soul),<br>I charge you, be his faithful and true<br>wife !<br>Keep warm his hearth and clean his<br>board, and when<br>He speaks, be quick with your obe-<br>dience,<br>Still grind your paltry wants and low<br>desires<br>To dust beneath his heel, though,<br>even thus<br>The ground must hurt him,—it was<br>writ of old,<br>' Ye shall not yoke together ox and<br>ass'<br>The nobler and ignobler Ay, but<br>you<br>Shall do your part as well as such ill<br>things<br>Can do aught good You shall not<br>vex him,—mark<br>You shall not vex him, jar him<br>when he's sad<br>Or cross him when he's eager Under-<br>stand<br>To trick him with apparent sym-<br>pathies,<br>Nor let him see thee in the face too<br>near<br>And unlearn thy sweet seeming Pay<br>the price<br>Of lies by being constrained to lie on<br>still,<br>'Tis easy for thy sort a million<br>more<br>Will scarcely damn thee deeper<br>“ Doing which,<br>You are very safe from Marian and<br>myself<br>We'll breathe as softly as the infant<br>here,<br>And stir no dangerous embers Fail<br>a point,<br>And show our Romney wounded, ill-<br>content<br>Tormented in his home, we open<br>mouth,<br>And such a noise will follow, the Last<br>Trump's |
| “ But you—you are a woman and<br>more bold<br>To do you justice, you'd not shrink to<br>face<br>We'll say, the unfledged life in the<br>other room<br>Which treading down God's corn,<br>you trod in sight<br>Of all the dogs, in reach of all the<br>guns —<br>Ay, Marian's babe, her poor un-<br>fathered child<br>Her yearling babe !—you'd face him<br>when he wakes<br>And opens up his wonderful blue eyes<br>You'd meet them and not wink per-<br>haps nor fear<br>God's triumph in them and supreme<br>revenge,<br>When, righting His creation's balance-<br>scale<br>(You pulled as low as Tophet) to the<br>top<br>Of most celestial innocence ! For me<br>Who am not as bold, I own those<br>infant eyes<br>Have set me praying<br>“ While they look at heaven<br>No need of protestation in my words<br>Against the place you've made them !<br>let them look !<br>They'll do your business with the<br>heavens be sure |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |

Will scarcely seem more dreadful,  
 even to you,  
 You'll have no pipers after Romney  
 will  
 (I know him) push you forth as none  
 of his,  
 All other men declaring it well done,  
 While women, even the worst, your  
 like, will draw  
 Their skirts back, not to brush you in  
 the street,  
 And so I warn you I'm Aurora  
 Leigh "

The letter written I felt satisfied  
 The ashes, smouldering in me, were  
 thrown out  
 By handfuls from me I had writ my  
 heart  
 And wept my tears, and now was cool  
 and calm,  
 And, going straightway to the neigh-  
 bouring room,  
 I lifted up the curtains of the bed  
 Where Marian Erle, the babe upon  
 her arm,  
 Both faces leaned together like a pair  
 Of folded innocences, self-complete  
 Each smiling from the other smiled  
 and slept  
 There seemed no sin, no shame, no  
 wrath, no grief  
 I felt she too, had spoken words that  
 night,  
 But softer certainly, and said to God,—  
 Who laughs in heaven perhaps, that  
 such as I  
 Should make ado for such as she —  
 "Defiled"  
 I wrote? "defiled" I thought her?  
 Stoop,  
 Stoop lower, Aurora! get the angels'  
 leave  
 To creep in somewhere, humbly, on  
 your knees,  
 Within this round of sequestration  
 white  
 In which they have wrapt earth's  
 foundlings, heaven's elect!

The next day, we took train to Italy  
 And fled on southward in the roar of  
 steam  
 The marriage-bells of Romney must  
 be loud,  
 To sound so clear through all! I was  
 not well,

And truly, though the truth is like a  
 jest,  
 I could not choose but fancy, half the  
 way,  
 I stood alone in the belfry, fifty bells  
 Of naked iron mad with merriment  
 (As one who laughs and cannot stop  
 himself),  
 All clanking at me, in me, over me,  
 Until I shrieked a shriek I could not  
 hear,  
 And swooned with noise,—but still,  
 along my swoon,  
 Was 'ware the baffled changes back-  
 ward rang,  
 Prepared, at each emerging sense, to  
 beat  
 And crash it out with clangour I was  
 weak,  
 I struggled for the posture of my  
 soul  
 In upright consciousness of place and  
 time  
 But evermore, 'twixt waking and  
 asleep  
 Slipped somehow, staggered, caught  
 at Marian's eyes  
 A moment (it is very good for strength  
 To know that someone needs you to  
 be strong),  
 And so recovered what I called myself,  
 For that time  
 I just knew it when we swept  
 Above the old roofs of Dijon Lyons  
 dropped  
 A spark into the night, half trodden  
 out  
 Unseen But presently the winding  
 Rhone  
 Washed out the moonlight large along  
 his banks,  
 Which strained their yielding curves  
 out clear and clean  
 To hold it—shadow of town and castle  
 blurred  
 Upon the hurrying river Such an air  
 Blew thence upon the forehead—half  
 an air  
 And half a water,—that I leaned and  
 looked,  
 Then, turning back on Marian, smiled  
 to mark  
 That she looked only on her child  
 who slept,  
 His face towards the moon too  
 So we passed

The liberal open country and the close,  
 And shot through tunnels, like a light-  
 ning-wedge  
 By great Thor-hammers driven  
 through the rock,  
 Which quivering through the intes-  
 tine blackness, splits,  
 And lets it in at once the train swept  
 in  
 Athrob with effort, trembling with  
 resolve,  
 The fierce denouncing whistle wailing  
 on  
 And dying off smothered in the shud-  
 dering dark,  
 While we self-awed, drew troubled  
 breath, oppressed  
 As other Titans, underneath the pile  
 And nightmare of the mountains  
 Out at last,  
 To catch the dawn afloat upon the  
 land !  
 —Hills, slung forth broadly and  
 gauntly everywhere,  
 Not cramped in their foundations,  
 pushing wide  
 Rich outspreads of the vineyards and  
 the corn  
 (As if they entertained 'r the name of  
 France),  
 While down their straining sides,  
 streamed manifest  
 A soil as red as Charlemagne's  
 knightly blood  
 To consecrate the verdure Some one  
 said  
 "Marseilles !" And lo the city of  
 Marseilles,  
 With all her ships behind her, and  
 beyond,  
 The scimitar of ever-shining sea  
 For right-hand use, bared blue against  
 the sky !

That night we spent between the pur-  
 ple heaven  
 And purple water I think Marian  
 slept,  
 But I, as a dog a-watch for his master's  
 foot,  
 Who cannot sleep or eat before he  
 hears  
 I sate upon the deck and watched all  
 night

And listened through the stars for  
 Italy  
 Those marriage-bells I spoke of,  
 sounded far,  
 As some child's go-cart in the street  
 beneath  
 To a dying man who will not pass the  
 day,  
 And knows it, holding by a hand he  
 loves  
 I too sate quiet satisfied with death,  
 Sate silent I could hear my own soul  
 speak,  
 And had my friend,—for Nature  
 comes sometimes  
 And says "I am ambassador for  
 God"  
 I felt the wind soft from the land of  
 souls,  
 The old miraculous mountains heaved  
 in sight,  
 One straining past another along the  
 shore  
 The way of grand dull Odyssean ghosts  
 Athrust to drink the cool blue wine of  
 seas  
 And stare on voyagers Peak pushing  
 peak  
 They stood I watched beyond that  
 Tyrian belt  
 Of intense sea betwixt them and the  
 ship,  
 Down all their sides the misty olive-  
 woods  
 Dissolving in the weak congenial  
 moon  
 And still disclosing some brown con-  
 vent-tower  
 That seems as if it grew from some  
 brown rock,—  
 Or many a little lighted village dropt  
 Like a fallen star upon so high a point,  
 You wonder what can keep it in its  
 place  
 From sliding headlong with the water-  
 falls  
 Which drop and powder all the myrtle-  
 groves  
 With spray of silver Thus my Italy  
 Was stealing on us Genoa broke  
 with day,  
 The Dorias' long pale palace striking  
 out  
 From green hills in advance of the  
 white town,  
 A marble figure dominant to ships,

Seen glimmering through the uncertain grey of dawn

But then I did not think, "my Italy,"

I thought, "my father!" O my father's house,

Without his presence!—Places are too much

Or else too little, for immortal man

Too little when love's May o'ergrows the ground,—

Too much when that luxuriant wealth of green

Is rustling to our ankles in dead leaves 'Tis only good to be or here or there,

Because we had a dream on such a stone

Or this or that—but, once being wholly waked,

And come back to the stone without the dream

We trip upon't,—alas! and hurt ourselves,

Or else it falls on us and grinds us flat

The heaviest grave-stone on this burying earth

—But while I stood and mused, a quiet touch

Fell light upon my arm, and, turning round,

A pair of moistened eyes convicted mine

"What Marian! is the babe astir so soon?"

"He sleeps," she answered, "I have crept up thrice

And see you sitting, standing, still at watch

I thought it did you good till now, but now"

"But now" I said, "you leave the child alone"

"And *you're* alone," she answered,—and she looked

As if I, too, were something, Sweet the help

Of one we have helped! Thanks, Marian, for that help

I found a house, at Florence, on the hill

Of Bellosguardo 'Tis a tower that keeps

A post of double-observation o'er The valley of Arno (holding as a hand

The outspread city) straight toward Fiesole

And Mount Morello and the setting sun—

The Vallombrosan mountains to the right

Which sunrise fills as full as crystal cups

Wine-filled and red to the brim because it's red

No sun could die, nor yet be born, unseen

By dwellers at my villa morn and eve

Were magnified before us in the pure Illimitable space and pause of sky

Intense as angels' garments blanched with God,

Less blue than radiant From the outer wall

Of the garden, dropped the mystic floating grey

Of olive-trees (with interruptions green From maize and vine) until 'twas caught and torn

On that abrupt black line of cypresses Which signed the way to Florence.

Beautiful

The city lay along the ample vale Cathedral, tower and palace piazza

and street,

The river trailing like a silver cord Through all, and curling loosely, both before

And after, over the whole stretch of land

Sown whitely up and down its opposite slopes,

With farms and villas

Many weeks had passed,

No word was granted—Last, a letter came

From Vincent Carrington—"My dear Miss Leigh

You've been as silent as a poet should, When any other man is sure to speak

If sick, if vexed, if dumb, a silver-piece

Will split a man's tongue,—straight he speaks and says,

'Received that cheque' But you! I send you funds

To Paris and you make no sign at all Remember I'm responsible and wait

A sign of you, Miss Leigh

" Meantime your book  
 Is eloquent as if you were not dumb,  
 And common critics, ordinarily deaf  
 To such fine meanings, and, like deaf  
 men loth  
 To seem deaf, answering chance-wise,  
 yes or no,  
 ' It must be,' or ' it must not ' (most  
 pronounced  
 When least convinced), pronounce for  
 once aright  
 You'd think they really heard,—and  
 so they do  
 The burr of three or four who really  
 hear  
 And praise your book aright Fame's  
 smallest trump  
 Is a great ear-trumpet for the deaf as  
 posts,  
 No other being effective Fear not,  
 friend,  
 We think here, you have written a  
 good book,  
 And you, a woman ! It was in you—  
 yes,  
 I felt 'twas in you yet I doubted  
 half  
 If that od-force of German Reichen-  
 bach  
 Which still from female finger-tips  
 burns blue  
 Could strike out, as our masculine  
 white heats  
 To quicken a man Forgive me All  
 my heart  
 Is quick with yours, since, just a fort-  
 night since  
 I read your book and loved it  
 " Will you love  
 My wife too ? Here's my secret, I  
 might keep  
 A month more from you ! but I yield  
 it up  
 Because I know you'll write the sooner  
 for't —  
 Most women (of your height even)  
 counting love  
 Life's only serious business Who's  
 my wife  
 That shall be in a month ? you ask ?  
 nor guess ?  
 Remember what a pair of topaz eyes  
 You once detected, turned against  
 the wall,  
 That morning in my London painting-  
 room

The face half-sketched, and slurred,  
 the eyes alone !  
 But you you caught them up  
 with yours, and said  
 ' Kate Ward's eyes, surely '—Now, I  
 own the truth  
 I had thrown them there to keep them  
 safe from Jove,  
 They would so naughtily find out  
 their way  
 To both the heads of both my Danaes,  
 Where just it made me mad to look  
 at them  
 Such eyes ! I could not paint or think  
 of eyes  
 But those,—and so I flung them into  
 paint  
 And turned them to the wall's care  
 Ay, but now  
 I've let them out, my Kate's ! I've  
 painted her  
 (I'll change mystyle, and leave mytho-  
 logies),  
 The whole sweet face, it looks upon  
 my soul  
 Like a face on water, to beget itself  
 A half-length portrait, in a hanging  
 cloak  
 Like one you wore once, 'tis a little  
 frayed,  
 I pressed, too, for the nude harmon-  
 ious arm—  
 But she she'd have her way, and  
 have her cloak,  
 She said she could be like you only  
 so,  
 And would not miss the fortune Ah,  
 my friend,  
 You'll write and say she shall not miss  
 your love  
 Through meeting mine ? in faith, she  
 would not change  
 She has your books by heart, more  
 than my words,  
 And quotes you up against me till I'm  
 pushed  
 Where, three months since, her eyes  
 were ! nay, in fact,  
 Nought satisfied her but to make me  
 paint  
 Your last book folded in her dimpled  
 hands,  
 Instead of my brown palette, as I  
 wished  
 (And, grant me the presentment had  
 been newer)

She'd grant me nothing I've com-  
 pounded for  
 The naming of the wedding-day next  
 month,  
 And gladly too 'Tis pretty, to re-  
 mark  
 How women can love women of your  
 sort,  
 And tie their hearts with love-knots  
 to your feet,  
 Grow insolent about you against  
 men  
 And put us down by putting up the  
 lip  
 As if a man,—there *are* such, let us  
 own,  
 Who write not ill,—remains a man,  
 poor wretch,  
 While you——! Write weaker than  
 Aurora Leigh  
 And there'll be women who believe of  
 you  
 (Besides my Kate) that if you walked  
 on sand  
 You would not leave a foot-print  
 "Are you put  
 To wonder by my marriage like poor  
 Leigh?  
 'Kate Ward!' he said 'Kate  
 Ward!' he said anew  
 'I thought' he said, and stopped,  
 —'I did not think'  
 And then he dropped to silence  
 "Ah, he's changed  
 I had not seen him, you're aware, for  
 long  
 But went of course I have not  
 touched on this  
 Through all this letter,—conscious of  
 your heart,  
 And writing lightlier for the heavy  
 fact,  
 As clocks are voluble with lead  
 "How poor  
 To say I'm sorry Dear Leigh dear-  
 est Leigh!  
 In those old days of Shropshire,—par-  
 don me—  
 When he and you fought many a field  
 of gold  
 On what you should do, or you should  
 not do,  
 Make bread or verses (it just came to  
 that),  
 I thought you'd one day draw a silken  
 peace

Through a golden ring I thought so  
 foolishly,  
 The event proved,—for you went  
 more opposite  
 To each other, month by month, and  
 year by year,  
 Until this happened God knows  
 best, we say  
 But hoarsely When the fever took  
 him first,  
 Just after I had writ to you in France,  
 They tell me Lady Waldemar mixed  
 drinks  
 And counted grains, like any salaried  
 nurse,  
 Excepting that she wept too Then  
 Lord Howe,  
 You're right about Lord Howe!  
 Lord Howe's a trump,  
 And yet, with such in his hand, a  
 man like Leigh  
 May lose as *he* does There's an end  
 to all—  
 Yes, even this letter, though the  
 second sheet  
 May find you doubtful Write a  
 word for Kate  
 Even now she reads my letters like a  
 wife,  
 And, if she sees her name, I'll see her  
 smile,  
 And share the luck So, bless you,  
 friend of two!  
 I will not ask you what your feelings is  
 At Florence, with my pictures I  
 can hear  
 Your heart a-flutter over the snow-  
 hills,  
 And, just to pace the Pitti with you  
 once,  
 I'd give a half-hour of to-morrow's  
 walk  
 With Kate I think so Vin-  
 cent Carrington"  
 The noon was hot, the air scorched  
 like the sun  
 And was shut out The closed per-  
 sian threw  
 Their long-scored shadows on my  
 villa-floor  
 And interlined the golden atmosphere  
 Straight, still,—across the pictures on  
 the wall,  
 The statuette on the console (of  
 young Love

|                                                                                              |                                                                                              |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| And Psyche made one marble by a<br>kiss),                                                    | —Why, this room stifles Better<br>burn than choke,                                           |
| The low couch where I leaned, the<br>table near,                                             | Best have air, air, although it comes<br>with fire,                                          |
| The vase of lilies Marian pulled last<br>night                                               | Throw open blinds and windows to<br>the noon                                                 |
| (Each green leaf and each white leaf<br>ruled in black                                       | And take a blister on my brow in-<br>stead                                                   |
| As if for writing some new text of<br>fate),                                                 | Of this dead weight ' best, perfectly<br>be stunned                                          |
| And the open letter, rested on my<br>knee,—                                                  | By those insufferable cicale, sick                                                           |
| But there, the lines swerved, trembled,<br>though I sate                                     | And hoarse with rapture of the sum-<br>mer-heat,                                             |
| Untroubled plainly read-<br>ing it again                                                     | That sing like poets, till their hearts<br>break sing                                        |
| And three times Well, he's married,<br>that is clear                                         | Till men say, " It's too tedious "                                                           |
| No wonder that he's married, nor<br>much more                                                | Books succeed,<br>And lives fail Do I feel it so, at<br>last ?                               |
| That Vincent's therefore, " sorry "                                                          | Kate loves a worn-out cloak for being<br>like mine,                                          |
| Why, of course                                                                               | While I live self-despised for being<br>myself,                                              |
| The lady nursed him when he was<br>not well                                                  | And yearn toward some one else who<br>yearns away                                            |
| Mixed drinks,—unless nepenthe was<br>the drink,                                              | From what he is, in his turn Strain<br>a step                                                |
| 'Twas scarce worth telling But a<br>man in love                                              | For ever yet gain no step ? Are we<br>such,                                                  |
| Will see the whole sex in his mis-<br>tress' hood,                                           | We cannot, with our admirations<br>even,                                                     |
| The prettier for its lining of fair rose ,<br>Although he catches back, and says<br>at last, | Our tip-toe aspirations, touch a thing<br>That's higher than we ? is all a dis-<br>mal flat, |
| " I'm sorry " Sorry Lady Walde-<br>mar                                                       | And God alone above each,—as the<br>sun                                                      |
| At prettiest, under the said hood,<br>preserved                                              | O'er level lagunes to make them<br>shine and stink,—                                         |
| From such a light as I could hold to<br>her face                                             | Laying stress upon us with immediate<br>flame                                                |
| To flare its ugly wrinkles out to<br>shame —                                                 | While we respond with our miasmal<br>fog                                                     |
| Is scarce a wife for Romney, as friends<br>judge,                                            | And call it mounting higher, because<br>we grow                                              |
| Aurora Leigh, or Vincent Carring-<br>ton,—                                                   | More highly fatal ?                                                                          |
| That's plain And if he's " con-<br>scious of my heart "                                      | Tush Aurora Leigh !                                                                          |
| Perhaps it's natural, though the<br>phrase is strong                                         | You wear your sackcloth looped in<br>Cæsar's way,                                            |
| (One's apt to use strong phrases, be-<br>ing in love),                                       | And brag your failings as mankind's<br>Be still                                              |
| And even that stuff of " fields of<br>gold " " gold rings "                                  | There is what's higher in this very<br>world,                                                |
| And what he " thought " poor Vin-<br>cent ! what he " thought "                              | Than you can live, or catch at Stand<br>aside,                                               |
| May never mean enough to ruffle me                                                           | And look at others—instance little<br>Kate !                                                 |

She'll make a perfect wife for Carrington  
 She always has been looking round  
 the earth  
 For something good and green to  
 alight upon  
 And nestle into, with those soft-  
 winged eyes  
 Subsiding now beneath his manly  
 hand  
 'Twixt trembling lids of inexpressive  
 joy  
 I will not scorn her, after all, too  
 much,  
 That so much she should love me A  
 wise man  
 Can pluck a leaf, and find a lecture  
 in't,  
 And I, too, God has made me,  
 —I've a heart  
 That's capable of worship, love, and  
 loss,  
 We say the same of Shakspeare's I'll  
 be meek,  
 And learn to reverence, even this  
 poor myself  
  
 The book, too—pass it "A good  
 book," says he,  
 And you a woman "I had laughed  
 at that,  
 But long since I'm a woman,—it is  
 true,  
 Alas, and woe to us, when we feel it  
 most!  
 Then, least care have we for the  
 crowns and goals,  
 And compliments on writing our good  
 books  
 The book has some truth in it, I be-  
 lieve  
 And truth outlives pain, as the soul  
 does life  
 I know we talk our Phædons to the  
 end  
 Through all the dismal faces that we  
 make,  
 O'er-wrinkled with dishonouring  
 agony  
 From any mortal drug I have  
 written truth,  
 And I a woman, feebly, partially,  
 Inapty in presentation, Romney'll  
 add,  
 Because a woman For the truth it-  
 self,

That's neither man's nor woman's,  
 but just God's,  
 None else has reason to be proud of  
 truth  
 Himself will see it sifted, disenthralled,  
 And kept upon the height and in the  
 light,  
 As far as, and no farther, than 'tis  
 truth,  
 For,—now He has left off calling firma-  
 ments  
 And strata, flowers and creatures,  
 very good,—  
 He says it still of truth, which is His  
 own  
  
 Truth, so far, in my book,—the truth  
 which draws  
 Through all things upwards, that a  
 twofold world  
 Must go to a perfect cosmos Natural  
 things  
 And spiritual,—who separates those  
 two  
 In art, in morals, or the social drift,  
 Tears up the bond of nature and  
 brings death  
 Paints futile pictures, writes unreal  
 verse  
 Leads vulgar days, deals ignorantly  
 with men,  
 Is wrong in short, at all points We  
 divide  
 This apple of life, and cut it through  
 the pips,—  
 The perfect round which fitted Venus'  
 hand  
 Has perished utterly as if we ate  
 Both halves Without the spiritual,  
 observe,  
 The natural's impossible,—no form,  
 No motion! Without sensuous,  
 spiritual  
 Is inappreciable,—no beauty or  
 power!  
 And in this twofold sphere the two-  
 fold man  
 (And still the artist is intensely a man)  
 Holds firmly by the natural, to reach  
 The spiritual beyond it,—fixes still  
 The type with mortal vision, to pierce  
 through,  
 With eyes immortal, to the antetype  
 Some call the ideal,—better called the  
 real  
 And certain to be called so presently



|                                                                                                                       |                                                                                                |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| When things shall have their names<br>Look long enough                                                                | But finds some coupling with the<br>spinning stars,                                            |
| On any peasant's face here, coarse<br>and lined                                                                       | No pebble at your foot, but proves a<br>sphere,                                                |
| You'll catch Antinous somewhere in<br>that clay,                                                                      | No chaffinch, but implies the cheru-<br>bim                                                    |
| As perfect-featured as he yearns at<br>Rome                                                                           | And—glancing on my own thin,<br>veined wrist,—                                                 |
| From marble pale with beauty, then<br>persist                                                                         | In such a little tremour of the blood<br>The whole strong clamour of a vehe-<br>ment soul      |
| And, if your apprehension's compe-<br>tent,                                                                           | Doth utter itself distinct Earth's<br>crammed with heaven,                                     |
| You'll find some fairer angel at his<br>back,                                                                         | And every common bush afire with<br>God                                                        |
| As much exceeding him, as he the<br>boor,                                                                             | But only he who sees, takes off his<br>shoes,                                                  |
| And pushing him with empyreal dis-<br>dain                                                                            | The rest sit round it, and pluck black-<br>berries,                                            |
| For ever out of sight Ay, Carring-<br>ton                                                                             | And daub their natural faces un-<br>aware                                                      |
| Is glad of such a creed! an artist must,<br>Who paints a tree, a leaf, a common<br>stone,                             | More and more, from the first simi-<br>tude                                                    |
| With just his hand, and finds it sud-<br>denly                                                                        | Truth, so far, in my book! a truth<br>which draws                                              |
| A-piece with and conterminous to his<br>soul                                                                          | From all things upwards I, Aurora,<br>still                                                    |
| Why else do these things move him,<br>leaf or stone?                                                                  | Have felt it hound me through the<br>wastes of life                                            |
| The bird's not moved, that pecks at a<br>spring-shoot,                                                                | As Jove did Io and, until that<br>Hand                                                         |
| Nor yet the horse, before a quarry,<br>agrazed                                                                        | Shall overtake me wholly, and, on my<br>head,                                                  |
| But man, the twofold creature, appre-<br>hends                                                                        | Lay down its large unfluctuating<br>peace,                                                     |
| The twofold manner, in and out-<br>wardly,                                                                            | The feverish gadfly pricks me up<br>and down,                                                  |
| And nothing in the world comes single<br>to him                                                                       | It must be Art's the witness of<br>what is                                                     |
| A mere itself,—cup column, or candle-<br>stick                                                                        | Behind this show If this world's<br>show were all,                                             |
| All patterns of what shall be in the<br>Mount,                                                                        | Then imitation would be all in Art,<br>There, Jove's hand grapes us!—For<br>we stand here, we, |
| The whole temporal show related<br>royally,                                                                           | If genuine artists, witnessing for<br>God's                                                    |
| And built up to eterne significance<br>Through the open arms of God                                                   | Complete, consummate, undivided<br>work                                                        |
| "There's nothing great<br>Nor small" has said a poet of our day<br>(Whose voice will ring beyond the<br>curfew of eve | —That not a natural flower can grow<br>on earth,                                               |
| And not be thrown out by the matin's<br>bell),                                                                        | Without a flower upon the spiritual<br>side                                                    |
| And truly I reiterate nothing's<br>small!                                                                             | Substantial, archetypal all aglow<br>With blossoming causes—not so far<br>away,                |
| No lily-muffled hum of a summer-bee                                                                                   |                                                                                                |

But we, whose spirit-sense is somewhat cleared,  
 May catch at something of the bloom and breath,—  
 Too vaguely apprehended, though indeed  
 Still apprehended, consciously or not,  
 And still transferred to picture, music, verse  
 For thrilling audient and beholding souls  
 By signs and touches which are known to souls,—  
 How known, they know not,— why, they cannot find,  
 So straight call out on genius, say, “A man  
 Produced this,”—when much rather they should say,  
 “ ’T is insight, and he saw this ”  
 Thus is Art  
 Self-magnified in magnifying a truth  
 Which fully recognised, would change the world  
 And shift its morals If a man could feel,  
 Not one day, in the artist’s ecstasy,  
 But every day, feast, fast, or working-day,  
 If espiritual significance burn through  
 The hieroglyphic of material shows,  
 Henceforward he would paint the globe with wings,  
 And reverence fish and fowl, the bull, the tree,  
 And even his very body as a man,—  
 Which now he counts so vile, that all the towns  
 Make offal of their daughters for its use  
 On summer-nights, when God is sad in heaven  
 To think what goes on in His recreant world  
 He made quite other, while that moon He made  
 To shine there, at the first love’s covenant  
 Shines still, convictive as a marriage-ring  
 Before adulterous eyes  
 How sure it is  
 That, if we say a true word, instantly  
 We feel ’tis God’s not ours, and pass it on

As bread at sacrament, we taste and pass  
 Nor handle for a moment, as indeed  
 We dared to set up any claim to such !  
 And I—my poem,—let my readers talk,  
 I’m closer to it—I can speak as well  
 I’ll say with Romney, that the book is weak  
 The range uneven, the points of sight obscure  
 The music interrupted

Let us go.  
 The end of woman (or of man, I think)  
 Is not a book Alas, the best of books  
 Is but a word in Art, which soon grows cramped,  
 Stiff, dubious-statured with the weight of years,  
 And drops an accent or digamma down  
 Some cranny of unfathomable time,  
 Beyond the critic’s reaching Art itself,  
 We’ve called the higher life, still must feel the soul  
 Live past it For more’s felt than is perceived,  
 And more’s perceived than can be interpreted,  
 And Love strikes higher with his lambent flame  
 Than Art can pile the faggots  
 Is it so ?  
 When Jove’s hand meets us with composing touch,  
 And when, at last, we are hushed and satisfied,—  
 Then, Io does not call it truth, but love ?

Well, well ! my father was an Englishman  
 My mother’s blood in me is not so strong  
 That I should bear this stress of Tuscan noon  
 And keep my wits The town, there, seems to seethe  
 In this Medæan boil-pot of the sun,  
 And all the patient hills are bubbling round  
 As if a prick would leave them flat  
 Does heaven  
 Keep far off, not to set us in a blaze ?

Not so,—let drag your fiery fringes,  
     heaven,  
 And burn us up to quiet ! Ah, we  
     know  
 Too much here, not to know what's  
     best for peace,  
 We have too much light here, not to  
     want more fire  
 To purify and end us   We talk, talk,  
 Conclude upon divine philosophies,  
 And get the thanks of men for hope-  
     ful books,  
 Whereat we take our own life up, and  
     pshaw !  
 Unless we piece it with another's life  
 (A yard of silk to carry out our lawn),  
 As well suppose my little handker-  
     chief  
 Would cover Samminato, church  
     and all,  
 If out I threw it past the cypresses,  
 As, in this ragged, narrow life of mine,  
 Contain my own conclusions  
                     But at least  
 We'll shut up the persiani, and sit  
     down,  
 And when my head's done aching, in  
     the cool,  
 Write just a word to Kate and  
     Carrington  
 May joy be with them ! she has chosen  
     well,  
 And he not ill  
             I should be glad, I think,  
 Except for Romney   Had *he* married  
     Kate,  
     surely, surely, should be very glad  
 Thus Florence sits upon me easily,  
 With native air and tongue My  
     graves are calm,  
 And do not too much hurt me   Mari-  
     an's good,  
 Gentle and loving,—lets me hold the  
     child,  
 Or drags him up the hills to find me  
     flowers  
 And fill those vases, ere I'm quite  
     awake,—  
 The grandiose red tulips, which grow  
     wild,  
 Or else my purple lilies, Dante blew  
 To a larger bubble with his prophet-  
     breath,  
 Or one of those tall flowering reeds  
     which stand  
 In Arno like a sheaf of sceptres, left

By some remote dynasty of dead  
     gods,  
 To suck the stream for ages and get  
     green,  
 And blossom wheresoe'er a hand  
     divine  
 Had warmed the place with ichor  
     Such I've found  
 At early morning, laid across my  
     bed,  
 And woke up pelted with a childish  
     laugh  
 Which even Marian's low precipitous  
     " hush "

Had vainly interposed to put away,—  
 While I, with shut eyes, smile and  
     motion for  
 The dewy kiss that's very sure to  
     come  
 From mouth and cheeks, the whole  
     child's face at once  
 Dissolved on mine,—as if a nosegay  
     burst  
 Its string with the weight of roses  
     overblown,  
 And dropt upon me   Surely I should  
     be glad  
 The little creature almost loves me  
     now,  
 And calls my name   " Alola,"  
     stripping off  
 The 's like thorns, to make it smooth  
     enough  
 To take between his dainty, milk-fed  
     lips,  
 God love him ! I should certainly  
     be glad,  
 Except, God help me, that I'm sor-  
     rowful,  
 Because of Romney  
             Romney, Romney ! Well,  
 This grows absurd !—too like a tune  
     that runs  
 I' the head, and forces all things in  
     the world,  
 Wind, rain, the creaking gnat or  
     stuttering fly,  
 To sing itself and vex you,—yet  
     perhaps  
 A paltry tune you never fairly liked,  
 Some " I'd be a butterfly, " or " C'est  
     l'amour "

We're made so,—not such tyrants to  
     ourselves,  
 We are not slaves to nature   Some of  
     us

Are turned, too, overmuch like some  
 poor verse  
 With a trick of ntournelle the same  
 thing goes  
 And comes back ever

Vincent Carrington

Is "sorry," and I'm sorry, but *he's*  
 strong  
 To mount from sorrow to his heaven  
 of love,  
 And when he says at moments, "Poor,  
 poor Leigh,  
 Who'll never call his own, so true a  
 heart,  
 So far a face even,"—he must quickly  
 lose  
 The pain of pity in the blush he has  
 made  
 By his very pitying eyes The snow,  
 for him,  
 Has fallen in May, and finds the whole  
 earth warm,  
 And melts at the first touch of the  
 green grass

But Romney,—he has chosen, after  
 all  
 I think he had as excellent a sun  
 To see by, as most others, and per-  
 haps  
 Has scarce seen really worse than  
 some of us,  
 When all's said Let him pass I'm  
 not too much  
 A woman, not to be a man for once,  
 And bury all my Dead like Alaric,  
 Depositing the treasures of my soul  
 In this drained water-course, and,  
 letting flow  
 The river of life again, with com-  
 merce ships  
 And pleasure-barges, full of silks and  
 songs  
 Blow, winds, and help us  
 Ah, we mock ourselves  
 With talking of the winds! perhaps  
 as much  
 With other resolutions How it  
 weighs,  
 This hot, sick air! and how I covet  
 here  
 The Dead's provision on the river's  
 couch,  
 With silver curtains drawn on tink-  
 ling rings!

Or else their rest in quiet crypts,—  
 laid by  
 From heat and noise!—from those  
 cicale, say,  
 And this more vexing heart-beat  
 So it is  
 We covet for the soul, the body's  
 part,  
 To die and rot Even so, Aurora,  
 ends  
 Our aspiration, who bespoke our  
 place  
 So far in the East The Occidental  
 flats  
 Had fed us fatter, therefore? we have  
 climbed  
 Where herbage ends? we want the  
 beast's part now,  
 And tire of the angel's?—Men define  
 a man,  
 The creature who stands front-ward  
 to the stars,  
 The creature who looks inward to  
 himself,  
 The tool-wright, laughing creature.  
 'Tis enough  
 We'll say instead, the inconsequent  
 creature, man,—  
 For that's his specialty What  
 creature else  
 Conceives the circle, and then walks  
 the square?  
 Loves things proved bad, and leaves a  
 thing proved good?  
 You think the bee makes honey half  
 a year,  
 To loathe the comb in winter, and  
 desire  
 The little ants' food rather? But a  
 man—  
 Note men!—they are but women  
 after all,  
 As women are but Auroras!—there  
 are men  
 Born tender, apt to pale at a trodden  
 worm,  
 Who paint for pastime, in their  
 favourite dream,  
 Spruce auto-vestments flowered with  
 crocus-flames  
 There are, too, who believe in hell,  
 and lie  
 There are, who waste their souls in  
 working out  
 Life's problem on these sands be-  
 twixt two tides,

And end,—“ Now give us the beast's  
 part, in death ”  
 Alas long-suffering and most patient  
 God,  
 Thou need'st be surelier God to bear  
 with us  
 Than even to have made us ! Thou,  
 aspire, aspire  
 From henceforth for me ! Thou who  
 hast, Thyself,  
 Endured this fleshhood, knowing  
 how, as a soaked  
 And sucking vesture, it would drag us  
 down  
 And choke us in the melancholy Deep,  
 Sustain me, that, with Thee, I walk  
 these waves,  
 Resisting!—breathe me upward, Thou  
 for me  
 Aspiring, Who art the Way, the Truth,  
 the Life,—  
 That no truth henceforth seem indif-  
 ferent,  
 No way to truth laborious, and no  
 life,  
 Not even this life I live, intolerable !  
  
 The days went by I took up the  
 old days  
 With all their Tuscan pleasures, worn  
 and spoiled,—  
 Like some lost book we dropt in the  
 long grass  
 On such a happy summer-afternoon  
 When last we read it with a loving  
 friend,  
 And find in autumn, when the friend  
 is gone,  
 The grass cut short, the weather  
 changed, too late,  
 And stare at, as at something wonder-  
 ful  
 For sorrow,—thinking how two  
 hands, before,  
 Had held up what is left to only one,  
 And how we smiled when such a vehem-  
 ent nail  
 Impressed the tiny dint here, which  
 presents  
 This verse in fire for ever ! Tenderly  
 And mournfully I lived I knew the  
 birds  
 And insects,—which look fathered by  
 the flowers  
  
 And emulous of their hues I recog-  
 nised  
 The moths, with that great overpoise  
 of wings  
 Which makes a mystery of them how  
 at all  
 They can stop flying butterflies, that  
 bear  
 Upon their blue wings such red  
 embers round,  
 They seem to scorch the blue air into  
 holes  
 Each flight they take and hflies,  
 that suspire  
 In short soft lapses of transported  
 flame  
 Across the tingling Dark, while over-  
 head  
 The constant and inviolable stars  
 Outburn those lights-of-love melo-  
 dious owls  
 (If music had but one note and was  
 sad,  
 'Twould sound just so), and all the  
 silent swirl  
 Of bats, that seem to follow in the air  
 Some grand circumference of a  
 shadowy dome  
 To which we are blind and then  
 the nightingales,  
 Which pluck our heart across a gar-  
 den wall  
 (When walking in the town) and carry  
 it  
 So high into the bowery almond-trees,  
 We tremble and are afraid, and feel  
 as if  
 The golden flood of moonlight un-  
 ware  
 Dissolved the pillars of the steady  
 earth  
 And made it less substantial And I  
 knew  
 The harmless opal snakes, and large-  
 mouthed frogs  
 Those noisy vaunters of their shal-  
 low streams)  
 And lizards the green lightnings of  
 the wall,  
 Which if you sit down still nor sigh  
 too loud,  
 Will flatter you and take you for a  
 stone  
 And flash familiarly about your feet  
 With such prodigious eyes in such  
 small heads !—

I knew them (though they had somewhat dwindled from  
 My childish imagery), and kept in mind  
 How last I sate among them equally  
 In fellowship and mateship, as a child  
 Will bear him still toward insect, beast, and bird,  
 Before the Adam in him has foregone  
 All privilege of Eden,—making friends  
 And talk, with such a bird or such a goat,  
 And buying many a two-inch-wide  
 rush-cage  
 To let out the caged cricket on a tree  
 Saying, "Oh, my dear grillino, were you cramped?"  
 And are you happy with the ilex-leaves?  
 And do you love me who have let you go?  
 Say *yes* in singing, and I'll understand!"

But now the creatures all seemed farther off,  
 No longer mine, nor like me, only *there*  
 A gulf between us I could yearn indeed,  
 Like other rich men, for a drop of dew  
 To cool this heat,—a drop of the early dew,  
 The irrecoverable child-innocence  
 (Before the heart took fire and withered life)  
 When childhood might pair equally with birds,  
 But now the birds were grown too proud for us!  
 Alas, the very sun forbids the dew  
 And I, I had come back to an empty nest,  
 Which every bird's too wise for How I heard  
 My father's step on that deserted ground,  
 His voice along that silence, as he told  
 The names of bird and insect, tree and flower  
 And all the presentations of the stars  
 Across Valdarno, interposing still  
 "My child," "my child" When fathers say "my child,"  
 'Tis easier to conceive the universe,

And life's transitions down the steps of law

I rode once to the little mountain-house  
 As fast as if to find my father there,  
 But, when in sight of 't, within fifty yards,  
 I dropped my horse's bridle on his neck  
 And paused upon his flank The house's front  
 Was cased with lingots of ripe Indian corn  
 In tessellated order, and device  
 Of golden patterns not a stone of wall  
 Uncovered,—not an inch of room to grow  
 A vine-leaf The old porch had disappeared,  
 And, in the open doorway, sate a girl  
 At plaiting straws,—her black hair strained away  
 To a scarlet kerchief caught beneath her chin  
 In Tuscan fashion,—her full ebon eyes,  
 Which looked too heavy to be lifted so,  
 Still dropt and lifted toward the mulberry-tree  
 On which the lads were busy with their staves  
 In shout and laughter, stripping all the boughs  
 As bare as winter, of those summer leaves  
 My father had not changed for all the silk  
 In which the ugly silkworms hide themselves  
 Enough My horse recoiled before my heart—  
 I turned the rein abruptly Back we went  
 As fast, to Florence  
 That was trial enough  
 Of graves I would not visit, if I could,  
 My father's, or my mother's any more,  
 To see if stone-cutter or lichen beat  
 So early in the race, or throw my flowers,  
 Which could not out-smell heaven, c3  
 sweeten earth

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| <p>They live too far above, that I should<br/>look<br/>So far below to find them let me<br/>think<br/>That rather they are visiting my<br/>grave<br/>This life here (undeveloped yet to<br/>life),<br/>And that they drop upon me, now<br/>and then,<br/>For token or for solace, some small<br/>weed<br/>Least odorous of the growths of<br/>paradise,<br/>To spare such pungent scents as kill<br/>with joy<br/>My old Assunta, too, was dead, was<br/>dead—<br/>O land of all men's past ' for me alone,<br/>It would not mix its tenses I was<br/>past,<br/>It seemed, like others,—only not in<br/>heaven<br/>And, many a Tuscan eve, I wandered<br/>down<br/>The cypress alley, like a restless ghost<br/>That tries its feeble ineffectual breath<br/>Upon its own charred funeral-brands<br/>put out<br/>Too soon,—where, black and stiff,<br/>stood up the trees<br/>Against the broad vermilion of the<br/>skies<br/>Such skies !—all clouds abolished in a<br/>sweep<br/>Of God's skirt, with a dazzle to<br/>ghosts and men,<br/>As down I went, saluting on the<br/>bridge<br/>The hem of such, before 'twas caught<br/>away<br/>Beyond the peaks of Lucca Under-<br/>neath,<br/>The river, just escaping from the<br/>weight<br/>Of that intolerable glory, ran<br/>In acquiescent shadow murmurously<br/>And up beside it, streamed the festa-<br/>folk '<br/>With fellow-murmurs from their feet<br/>and fans<br/>(With <i>issimo</i> and <i>mo</i> and sweet poise<br/>Of vowels in their pleasant scandalous<br/>talk)<br/>Returning from the grand-duke's<br/>dairy-farm</p> | <p>Before the trees grew dangerous at<br/>eight<br/>(For, " trust no tree by moonlight,"<br/>Tuscans say),<br/>To eat their ice at Doni's tenderly—<br/>Each lovely lady close to a cavalier<br/>Who holds her dear fan while she<br/>feeds her smile<br/>On meditative spoonfuls of vanille,<br/>He breathing hot protesting vows o<br/>love,<br/>Enough to thaw her cream, and<br/>scorch his beard<br/>'Twas little matter I could pass<br/>them by<br/>Indifferently, not fearing to be known,<br/>No danger of being wrecked upon a<br/>friend,<br/>And forced to take an iceberg for an<br/>isle '<br/>The very English, here, must wait to<br/>learn<br/>To hang the cobweb of their gossip<br/>out<br/>And catch a fly I'm happy It's<br/>sublime,<br/>This perfect solitude of foreign lands '<br/>To be, as if you had not been till<br/>then<br/>And were then, simply that you chose<br/>to be<br/>To spring up, not be brought forth<br/>from the ground<br/>Like grasshoppers at Athens, and<br/>skip thrice<br/>Before a woman makes a pounce on<br/>you<br/>And plants you in her har !—<br/>possess, yourself,<br/>A new world all alive with creatures<br/>new,<br/>New sun, new moon, new flowers, new<br/>people—ah,<br/>And be possessed by none of them '<br/>no right<br/>In one, to call your name inquire<br/>your where,<br/>Or what you think of Mister Some-<br/>one's book,<br/>Or Mister Other's marriage, or decease,<br/>Or how's the headache which you had<br/>last week,<br/>Or why you look so pale still, since<br/>it's gone '<br/>—Such most surprising riddance of<br/>one's life</p> |
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Comes next one's death, it's disem-  
 bodiment  
 Without the pang I marvel, people  
 choose  
 To stand stockstill like fakirs, till the  
 moss  
 Grows on them and they cry out,  
 self-admired,  
 "How verdant and how virtuous!"  
 Well, I'm glad  
 Or should be, if grown foreign to my-  
 self  
 As surely as to others  
 Musing so,  
 I walked the narrow unrecognising  
 streets,  
 Where many a palace-front peers  
 gloomily  
 Through stony vizors iron-barred  
 (prepared  
 Alike, should foe or lover pass that  
 way,  
 For guest or victim), and came wan-  
 dering out  
 Upon the churches with mild open  
 doors  
 And plaintive wail of vespers, where a  
 few,  
 Those chiefly women, sprinkled round  
 in blots  
 Upon the dusky pavement, knelt and  
 prayed  
 Toward the altar's silver glory Off  
 a ray  
 (I liked to sit and watch) would  
 tremble out  
 Just touch some face more lifted,  
 more in need  
 Of course a woman's — while I  
 dreamed a tale  
 To fit its fortunes There was one  
 who looked  
 As if the earth had suddenly grown  
 too large  
 For such a little humpbacked thing as  
 she,  
 The pitiful black kerchief round her  
 neck  
 Sole proof she had had a mother  
 One, again,  
 Looked sick for love — seemed praying  
 some soft saint  
 To put more virtue in the new fine  
 scarf  
 She spent a fortnight's meals on,  
 yesterday,

That cruel Gigi might return his  
 eyes  
 From Guhana There was one, so  
 old,  
 So old, to kneel grew easier than to  
 stand,—  
 So solitary she accepts at last  
 Our Lady for her gossip, and frets on  
 Against the sinful world which goes  
 its rounds  
 In marrying and being married, just  
 the same  
 As when 'twas almost good and had  
 the right  
 (Her Gian alive, and she herself  
 eighteen)  
 And yet, now even, if Madonna willed,  
 She'd win a tern in Thursday's lottery,  
 And better all things Did she dream  
 for nought,  
 That, boiling cabbage for the fast-  
 day's soup,  
 It smelt like blessed entrails? such a  
 dream  
 For nought would sweetest Mary  
 cheat her so,  
 And lose that certain candle, straight  
 and white  
 As any fair grand-duchess in her teens,  
 Which otherwise should flare here in a  
 week?  
*Bemigna sis*, thou beauteous Queen  
 of heaven!

I sate there musing, and imagining  
 Such utterance from such faces poor  
 blind souls  
 That writhe toward heaven along  
 the devil's trail —  
 Who knows I thought, but He may  
 stretch His hand  
 And pick them up? 'tis written in the  
 Book  
 He heareth the young ravens when  
 they cry,  
 And yet they cry for carrion — O my  
 God,—  
 And we, who make excuses for the  
 rest,  
 We do it in our measure Then I  
 knelt,  
 And dropped my head upon the pave-  
 ment too,  
 And prayed, since I was foolish in  
 desire



Like other creatures, craving offal-  
food,  
That He would stop His ears to what  
I said,  
And only listen to the run and beat  
Of this poor, passionate, helpless  
blood—

And then  
I lay and spoke not But He heard  
in heaven  
So many Tuscan evenings passed the  
same !

I could not lose a sunset on the bridge,  
And would not miss a vigil in the  
church,  
And liked to mingle with the out-  
door crowd  
So strange and gay and ignorant of  
my face

For men you know not, are as good as  
trees

And only once, at the Santissima,  
I almost chanced upon a man I  
knew

Sir Blaise Delorme He saw me  
certainly,

And somewhat hurried, as he crossed  
himself,

The smoothness of the action,—then  
half bowed,

But only half, and merely to my  
shade,

I slipped so quick behind the por-  
phyry plinth,

And left him dubious if 'twas really I,  
Or peradventure Satan's usual trick

To keep a mounting saint uncanon-  
ised

But I was safe for that time, and he  
too,

The argent angels in the altar-flare  
Absorbed his soul next moment The  
good man !

In England we were scarce acquaint-  
ances,

That here in Florence he should keep  
my thought

Beyond the image on his eye, which  
came

And went and yet his thought  
disturbed my life

For after that, I oftener sate at home  
On evenings, watching how they fined  
themselves

With gradual conscience to a perfect  
night,

Until the moon, diminished to a  
curve,

Lay out there, like a sickle for His  
hand

Who cometh down at last to reap the  
earth

At such times, ended seemed my  
trade of verse,

I feared to jingle bells upon my robe  
Before the four-faced silent cherubim

With God so near me, could I sing of  
God ?

I did not write, nor read, nor even  
think,

But sate absorbed amid the quicken-  
ing glooms,

Most like some passive broken lump  
of salt

Dropt in by chance to a bowl of ceno-  
mel,

To spoil the drink a little, and lose  
itself,

Dissolving slowly, slowly, until lost

#### EIGHTH BOOK

ONE eve it happened, when I sate  
alone,

Alone upon the terrace of my tower,  
A book upon my knees, to counter-  
feit

The reading that I never read at all,  
While Manan, in the garden down  
below,

Knelt by the fountain I could just  
hear thrill

The drowsy silence of the exhausted  
day,

And peeled a new fig from that purple  
heap

In the grass beside her,—turning out  
the red

To feed her eager child (who sucked  
at it

With vehement lips across a gap of  
air

As he stood opposite, face and curls  
a-flame

With that last sun-ray crying, " give  
me, give,"

And stamping with imperious baby-  
feet

We're all born princes)—something  
startled me,—

The laugh of sad and innocent souls,  
that breaks

Abruptly, as if frightened at itself,

'Twas Marian laughed I saw her  
glance above  
In sudden shame that I should hear  
her laugh  
And straightway dropped my eyes  
upon my book  
And knew, the first time, 'twas Boc-  
caccio's tales,  
The Falcon's,—of the lover who for  
love  
Destroyed the best that loved him  
Some of us  
Do it still, and then we sit and laugh  
no more  
Laugh *you*, sweet Marian ! you've the  
right to laugh,  
Since God Himself is for you, and a  
child !  
For me there's somewhat less,—and  
so, I sigh

The heavens were making room to  
hold the night,  
The sevenfold heavens unfolding all  
their gates  
To let the stars out slowly (prophe-  
sied  
In close-approaching advent, not  
discerned),  
While still the cue-owls from the  
cypresses  
Of the Poggio called and counted  
every pulse  
Of the skye palpitation Gradually  
The purple and transparent shadows  
slow  
Had filled up the whole valley to the  
brim,  
And flooded all the city, which you  
saw  
As some drowned city in some en-  
chanted sea,  
Cut off from nature,—drawing you  
who gaze,  
With passionate desire, to leap and  
plunge,  
And find a sea-king with a voice of  
vaves  
And treacherous soft eyes, and  
slippery locks  
You cannot kiss but you shall bring  
away  
Their salt upon your lips The  
Duomo bell  
Strikes ten, as if it struck ten fathoms  
down,

So deep, and fifty churches answer  
it  
The same with fifty various instances  
Some gaslights tremble along squares  
and streets,  
The Pitti's palace-front is drawn in  
fire,  
And, past the quays, Maria Novella's  
Place,  
In which the mystic obelisks stand  
up  
Triangular, pyramidal, each based  
On a single trine of brazen tortoises,  
To guard that fair church, Buona-  
rotti's Bride,  
That stares out from her large blind  
dial-eyes,  
Her quadrant and armillary dials,  
black  
With rhythms of many suns and  
moons, in vain  
Inquiry for so rich a soul as his,—  
Methinks I have plunged, I see it all so  
clear  
And, oh my heart the sea-king !  
In my ears  
The sound of waters There he stood,  
my king !  
I felt him, rather than beheld him.  
Up  
I rose, as if he were my king indeed,  
And then sate down, in trouble at  
myself,  
And struggling for my woman's  
empire  
'Tis pitiful, but women are so made  
We'll die for you, perhaps,—'tis pro-  
bable,  
But we'll not spare you an inch of our  
full height  
We'll have our whole just stature —  
five feet four,  
Though laid out in our coffins pitiful !  
“ —You, Romney ! —Lady Walde-  
mar is here ? ”  
He answered in a voice which was not  
his,  
“ I have her letter, you shall read it  
soon  
But first, I must be heard a little, I,  
Who have waited long and travelled  
far for that  
Although you thought to have shut a  
tedious book

And farewell Ah, you dog-eared  
 such a page,  
 And here you find me "  
     Did he touch my hand,  
 Or but my sleeve ? I trembled, hand  
     and foot —  
 He must have touched me — " Will  
     you sit ? " I asked,  
 And motioned to a chair, but down  
     he sat,  
 A little slowly, as a man in doubt  
 Upon the couch beside me,—couch  
     and chair  
 Being wheeled upon the terrace  
     " You are come  
 My cousin Romney ?—this is wonder  
     ful  
 But all is wonder on such summer-  
     nights,  
 And nothing should surprise us any  
     more,  
 Who see that miracle of stars  
     Behold "

I signed above, where all the stars  
     were out,  
 As if an urgent heat had started there  
 A secret writing from a sombre page,  
 A blank last moment, crowded  
     suddenly  
 With hurrying splendours  
     " Then you do not know "—  
 He murmured  
     " Yes, I know," I said, " I know  
 I had the news from Vincent Carrington  
     ton  
 And yet I did not think you'd leave  
     the work  
 In England, for so much even,—  
     though, of course,  
 You'll make a work-day of your  
     holiday,  
 And turn it to our Tuscan people's  
     use,—  
 Who much need helping since the  
     Austrian boar  
 (So bold to cross the Alp by Lombardy  
 And dash his brute front unabashed  
     against  
 The steep snow-bosses of that shield of  
     God  
 Who soon shall rise in wrath and  
     shake it clear),  
 Came hither also,—raking up our  
     vines

And olive-gardens with his tyrannous  
     tusks  
 And rolling on our maize with all his  
     swine "

" You had the news from Vincent  
     Carrington "  
 He echoed,—picking up the phrase  
     beyond,  
 As if he knew the rest was merely talk  
 To fill a gap and keep out a strong  
     wind,  
 " You had, then, Vincent's personal  
     news ? "

" His own,"  
 I answered " All that ruined world  
     of yours  
 Seems crumbling into marriage  
     Carrington  
 Has chosen wisely "  
     " Do *you* take it so ? "  
 He cried, " and is it possible at  
     last "  
 He paused there,—and then, inward  
     to himself,  
 " Too much at last, too late !—yet  
     certainly "  
 (And there his voice swayed as an  
     Alpine plank  
 That feels a passionate torrent under-  
     neath)  
 " The knowledge had I known it  
     first or last,  
 Could scarce have changed the actual  
     case for *me*  
 And best, for *her* at this time "  
     Nay, I thought  
 He loves Kate Ward, it seems, now,  
     like a man,  
 Because he has married Lady Walde-  
     mar  
 Ah, Vincent's letter said how Leigh  
     was moved  
 To hear that Vincent was betrothed  
     to Kate  
 With what cracked pitchers go we to  
     deep wells  
 In this world ! Then I spoke,— " I  
     did not think,  
 My cousin you had ever known  
     Kate Ward "

" In fact I never knew her 'Tis  
     enough  
 That Vincent did, before he chose his  
     wife

For other reasons than those topaz  
eyes  
I've heard of Not to undervalue  
them,  
For all that One takes up the world  
with eyes "

—Including Romney Leigh, I thought  
again,  
Albert he knows them only by repute  
How vile must all men be since *he's*  
a man

His deep pathetic voice, as if he  
guessed  
I did not surely love him, took the  
word,  
" You never got a letter from Lord  
Howe  
A month back, dear Aurora ? "

" None," I said  
" I felt it was so," he replied " Yet,  
strange !  
Sir Blaise Delorme has passed through  
Florence ? "

" Ay,  
By chance I saw him in Our Lady's  
church  
(I saw him mark you, but he saw  
not me),  
Clean-washed in holy water from the  
count  
Of things terrestrial,—letters and  
the rest,  
He had crossed us out together with  
his sins  
Ay, strange, but only strange that  
good Lord Howe  
Preferred him to the post because of  
pauls  
For me I'm sworn to never trust a  
man—  
At least with letters "

" There were facts to tell,—  
To smooth with eye and accent  
Howe supposed  
Well, well, no matter ! there was  
dubious need,  
You heard the news from Vincent  
Carrington  
And yet perhaps you had been startled  
less  
To see me, dear Aurora, if you had  
read  
That letter "

—Now he sets me down as vexed.  
I think I've draped myself in woman's  
pride  
To a perfect purpose Oh, I'm vexed,  
it seems !  
My friend Lord Howe deposes his  
friend Sir Blaise,  
To break as softly as a sparrow's egg  
That lets a bird out tenderly, the  
news  
Of Romney's marriage to a certain  
saint,  
To smooth with eye and accent,—  
indicate  
His possible presence Excellently  
well  
You've played your part, my Lady  
Waldemar —  
As I've played mine  
" Dear Romney," I began,  
" You did not use, of old, to be so like  
A Greek king coming from a taken  
Troy,  
'Twas needful that precursors spread  
your path  
With three-piled carpets, to receive  
your foot  
And dull the sound of 't For myself,  
be sure,  
Although it frankly ground the  
gravel here,  
I still can bear it Yet I'm sorry,  
too,  
To lose this famous letter, which Sir  
Blaise  
Has twisted to a lighter absently  
To fire some holy taper with Lord  
Howe  
Writes letters good for all things but  
to lose,  
And many a flower of London gos-  
sipry  
Has dropt wherever such a stem  
broke off,—  
Of course I know that, lonely among  
my vines,  
Where nothing's talked of, save the  
blight again,  
And no more Chianti ! Still the  
letter's use  
As preparation Did I start  
indeed ?  
Last night I started at a cockchafer,  
And shook a half-hour after Have  
you learnt  
No more of women, 'sprit of privilege,

Than still to take account too seriously  
 Of such weak flutterings? Why, we like it, sir —  
 We get our powers and our effects that way  
 The trees stand stiff and still at time of frost,  
 If no wind tears them, but, let summer come,  
 When trees are happy,—and a breath avails  
 To set them trembling through a million leaves  
 In luxury of emotion Something less  
 It takes to move a woman let her start  
 And shake at pleasure,—nor conclude at yours,  
 The winter's bitter,—but the summer's green "

He answered, " Be the summer ever green  
 With you, Aurora!—though you sweep your sex  
 With somewhat bitter gusts from where you live  
 Above them,—whirling downward from your heights  
 Your very own pine-cones, in a grand disdain  
 Of the lowland burrs with which you scatter them  
 So high and cold to others and yourself,  
 A little less to Romney, were unjust,  
 And thus, I would not have you Let it pass  
 I feel content, so You can bear indeed  
 My sudden step beside you but for me,  
 'Twould move me sore to hear your softened voice —  
 Aurora's voice,—if softened unaware  
 In pity of what I am "

Ah friend, I thought  
 As husband of the Lady Waldemar  
 You're granted very sorely pitiable!  
 And yet Aurora Leigh must guard her voice  
 From softening in the pity of your case,  
 As if from lie or licence Certainly

We'll soak up all the slush and soil of life  
 With softened voices, ere we come to you

At which I interrupted my own thought  
 And spoke out calmly " Let us ponder, friend  
 Whate'er our state, we must have made it first,  
 And though the thing displease us, ay, perhaps  
 Displease us warrantably never doubt  
 That other states, though possible once, and then  
 Rejected by the instinct of our lives,—  
 If then adopted, had displeased us more  
 Than this, in which the choice, the will, the love,  
 Has stamped the honour of a patent act  
 From henceforth What we choose, may not be good,  
 But, that we choose it, proves it good for us  
 Potentially, fantastically, now  
 Or last year, rather than a thing we saw,  
 And saw no need for choosing Moths will burn  
 Their wings,—which proves that light is good for moths,  
 Who else had flown not, where they agonise "

" Ay, light is good," he echoed, and there paused  
 And then abruptly, " Marian Marian's well? "

I bowed my head, but found no word 'Twas hard  
 To speak of *her* to Lady Waldemar's New husband How much did he know, at last?  
 How much? how little?—He would take no sign,  
 But straight repeated,—" Marian Is she well? "

" She's well," I answered  
 She was there in sight  
 An hour back, but the night had drawn her home,

Where still I heard her in an upper  
room,  
Her low voice singing to the child in  
bed,  
Who restless with the summer-heat  
and play  
And slumber snatched at noon, was  
long sometimes  
At falling off, and took a score of  
songs  
And mother-hushes, ere she saw him  
sound

"She's well," I answered

"Here?" he asked

"Yes, here"

He stopped and sighed "That shall  
be presently,  
But now this must be I have words  
to say,  
And would be alone to say them, I  
with you,  
And no third troubling"

"Speak then," I returned,  
"She will not vex you"

At which, suddenly  
He turned his face upon me with its  
smile,  
As if to crush me "I have read your  
book,  
Aurora"

"You have read it," I replied,  
"And I have writ it,—we have done  
with it  
And row the rest?"

"The rest is like the first"  
He answered,—"for the book is in  
my heart,  
Lives in me, wakes in me, and dreams  
in me  
My daily bread tastes of it,—and my  
wine

Which has no smack of it, I pour it  
out,  
It seems unnatural drinking"

Bitterly  
I took the word up, "Never waste  
your wine  
The book lived in me ere it lived in  
you,  
I know it closer than another does,  
And that it's foolish, feeble, and  
afraid,

And all unworthy so much compli-  
ment

Beseech you, keep your wine,—and,  
when you drink,  
Still wish some happier fortune to  
your friend,  
Than even to have written a far  
better book"

He answered gently, "That is conse-  
quent

The poet looks beyond the book he  
has made,

Or else he had not made it If a man  
Could make a man, he'd henceforth  
be a god

In feeling what a little thing is man  
It is not my case And this special  
book,

I did not make it, to make light of it  
It stands above my knowledge, draws  
me up,

'Tis high to me It may be that the  
book

Is not so high, but I so low, instead,  
Still high to me I mean no compli-  
ment

I will not say there are not, young or  
old,

Male writers, ay, or female,—let it  
pass,

Who'll write us richer and completer  
books

A man may love a woman perfectly,  
And yet by no means ignorantly  
maintain

A thousand women have not larger  
eyes

Enough that she alone has looked at  
him

With eyes that, large or small, have  
won his soul

And so, this book, Aurora,—so, your  
book"

"Alas," I answered, "is it so, in-  
deed?"

And then was silent

"Is it so, indeed,"  
He echoed, "that *alas* is all your  
word?"

I said,—"I'm thinking of a far-off  
June,

When you and I, upon my birthday  
once,

Discoursed of life and art, with both  
untried  
I'm thinking, Romney, how 'twas  
morning then,  
And now 'tis night "

" And now," he said, "'tis night "

" I'm thinking," I resumed, "'tis  
somewhat sad  
That if I had known, that morning  
in the dew,  
My cousin Romney would have said  
such words  
On such a night, at close of many  
years,  
In speaking of a future book of mine,  
It would have pleased me better as a  
hope,  
Than as an actual grace it can at all  
That's sad, I'm thinking "

" Ay," he said, "'tis night "

" And there," I added lightly, " are  
the stars "

And here, we'll talk of stars, and not  
of books "

" You have the stars," he mur-  
mured,— " it is well  
Be like them ! shine, Aurora, on my  
dark,  
Though high and cold and only like a  
star,  
And for this short night only,—you,  
who keep  
The same Aurora of the bright June  
day  
That withered up the flowers before  
my face,  
And turned me from the garden ever-  
more  
Because I was not worthy Oh, de-  
served,  
Deserved ! That I, who verily had  
not learnt  
God's lesson half, attaining as a  
dunce  
To obliterate good words with frac-  
tious thumbs  
And cheat myself of the context,—I  
should push  
Aside, with male ferocious impudence,  
The world's Aurora who had conned  
her part  
On the other side the leaf ! ignore her  
so,

Because she was a woman and a  
queen,  
And had no beard to bristle through  
her song,—  
My teacher, who has taught me with  
a book,  
My Miriam, whose sweet mouth,  
when nearly drowned  
I still heard singing on the shore !  
Deserved,  
That here I should look up into the  
stars  
And miss the glory "

" Can I understand ? "

I broke in " You speak wildly,  
Romney Leigh,  
Or I hear wildly In that morning-  
time  
We recollect, the roses were too  
red,  
The trees too green, reproach too  
natural  
If one should see not what the other  
saw  
And now, it's night, remember, we  
have shades  
In place of colours, we are now grown  
cold,  
And old, my cousin Romney Pardon me,—  
I'm very happy that you like my  
book,  
And very sorry that I quoted back  
A ten years' birthday, 'twas so mad  
a thing  
In any woman, I scarce marvel much  
You took it for a venturous piece of  
spite,  
Provoking such excuses, as indeed  
I cannot call you slack in "

" Understand,"

He answered sadly, " something, if  
but so  
This night is softer than an English  
day,  
And men may well come hither when  
they're sick  
To draw in easier breath from larger  
air  
'Tis thus with me, I've come to you,  
—to you,  
My Italy of women, just to breathe  
My soul out once before you, ere I  
go,  
As humble as God makes me at the  
last

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| <p>(I thank Him), quite out of the way of men,<br/>         And yours, Aurora,—like a punished child,<br/>         His cheeks all blurred with tears and naughtiness,<br/>         To silence in a corner I am come<br/>         To speak, beloved "<br/>             " Wisely, cousin Leigh,<br/>         And worthily of us both ! "<br/>             " Yes, worthily,<br/>         For this time I must speak out and confess<br/>         That I, so truculent in assumption once,<br/>         So absolute in dogma, proud in aim,<br/>         And fierce in expectation,—I, who felt<br/>         The whole world tugging at my skirts for help,<br/>         As if no other man than I, could pull,<br/>         Nor woman, but I led her by the hand,<br/>         Nor cloth hold, but I had it in my coat,—<br/>         Do know myself to-night for what I was<br/>         On that June-day, Aurora Poor bright day,<br/>         Which meant the best a woman and a rose,<br/>         And which I smote upon the cheek with words<br/>         Until it turned and rent me ! Young you were,<br/>         That birthday, poet, but you talked the right<br/>         While I, I built up follies like a wall<br/>         To intercept the sunshine and your face<br/>         Your face ! that's worse "<br/>             " Speak wisely, cousin Leigh "</p> <p>" Yes, wisely, dear Aurora, though too late<br/>         But then, not wisely I was heavy then,<br/>         And stupid, and distracted with the cries<br/>         Of tortured prisoners in the polished brass<br/>         Of that Phalarian bull, society,—<br/>         Which seems to bellow bravely like ten bulls,</p> | <p>But, if you listen, moans and cries instead<br/>         Despairingly, like victims tossed and gored<br/>         And trampled by their hoofs I heard the cries<br/>         Too close I could not hear the angels lift<br/>         A fold of rustling air, nor what they said<br/>         To help my pity I beheld the world<br/>         As one great famishing carnivorous mouth,—<br/>         A huge, deserted, callow, black, bird Thing,<br/>         With piteous open beak that hurt my heart,<br/>         Till down upon the filthy ground I dropped,<br/>         And tore the violets up to get the worms<br/>         ' Worms, worms,' was all my cry an open mouth<br/>         A gross want, bread to fill it to the lips,<br/>         No more ! That poor men narrowed their demands<br/>         To such an end, was virtue, I supposed,<br/>         Adjudicating that to see it so<br/>         Was reason Oh, I did not push the case<br/>         Up higher, and ponder how it answers, when<br/>         The rich take up the same cry for themselves<br/>         Professing equally,—' an open mouth,<br/>         A gross want, food to fill us, and no more ! '<br/>         Why that's so far from virtue, only vice<br/>         Finds reason for it ! That makes libertines<br/>         That slurs our cruel streets from end to end<br/>         With eighty-thousand women in one smile,<br/>         Who only smile at night beneath the gas<br/>         The body's satisfaction and no more,<br/>         Being used for argument against the soul's,<br/>         Here too ! the want, here too, implying the right<br/>         —How dark I stood that morning in the sun,</p> |
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| My best Aurora, though I saw your eyes,—           | And ordered, built the cards up high and higher,                                |
| When first you told me oh, I recollect             | Till, some one breathing, all fell flat again,                                  |
| The words and how you lifted your white hand,      | In setting right society's wide wrong, Mere life's so fatal! So I failed indeed |
| And how your white dress and your burnished curls  | Once, twice, and oftener,—hearing through the rents                             |
| Went greatening round you in the still blue air,   | Of obstinate purpose, still those words of yours,                               |
| As if an inspiration from within                   | ' <i>You will not compass your poor ends, not you!</i> '                        |
| Had blown them all out when you spoke the same,    | But harder than you said them, every time                                       |
| Even these,—' You will not compass your poor ends  | Still farther from your voice, until they came                                  |
| Of barley-feeding and material ease,               | To overcrow me with triumphant scorn                                            |
| Without the poet's individualism                   | Which vexed me to resistance Set down this                                      |
| To work your universal It takes a soul,            | For condemnation,—I was guilty here                                             |
| To move a body,—it takes a high-souled man,        | I stood upon my deed and fought my doubt,                                       |
| To move the masses even to a cleaner stye          | As men will,—for I doubted,—till at last                                        |
| It takes the ideal, to blow an inch inside         | My deed gave way beneath me suddenly,                                           |
| The dust of the actual and your Fouriers failed,   | And left me what I am The curtain dropped,                                      |
| Because not poets enough to understand             | My part quite ended, all the foot-lights quenched                               |
| That life develops from within' I say              | My own soul hissing at me through the dark,                                     |
| Your words,—I could say other words of yours,      | I, ready for confession,—I was wrong,                                           |
| For none of all your words has been more lost      | I've sorely failed, I've slipped the ends of life,                              |
| Than sweet verberna, which, being brushed against, | I yield, you have conquered "                                                   |
| Will hold you three hours after by the smell,      | " Stay," I answered him,                                                        |
| In spite of long walks on the windy hills          | " I've something for your hearing, also I                                       |
| But these words dealt in sharper perfume,—these    | Have failed too "                                                               |
| Were ever on me, stinging through my dreams,       | " You! " he said, " you're very great,                                          |
| And saying themselves for ever o'er my acts        | The sadness of your greatness fits you well                                     |
| Like some unhappy verdict That I failed,           | As if the plume upon a hero's casque                                            |
| Is certain Stye or no stye to contrive             | Should nod a shadow upon his victor face "                                      |
| Theswine's propulsion toward the precipice,        | I took him up austere,—" You have read                                          |
| Proved easy and plain I subtly organised           | My book but not my heart, for recollect,                                        |
|                                                    | 'Tis writ in Sanscrit, which you bungle at                                      |

I've surely failed, I know, if failure  
 means  
 To look back sadly on work gladly  
 done,—  
 To wander on my mountains of De-  
 light,  
 So called (I can remember a friend's  
 words  
 As well as you, sir), weary and in want  
 Of even a sheep-path, thinking bit-  
 terly  
 Well, well ! no matter I but say so  
 much,  
 To keep you, Romney Leigh, from  
 saying more,  
 And let you feel I am not so high in-  
 deed,  
 That I can bear to have you at my  
 foot,—  
 Or safe, that I can help you That  
 June-day,  
 Too deeply sunk in craterous sunsets  
 now  
 For you or me to dig it up alive,  
 To pluck it out all bleeding with  
 spent flame  
 At the roots, before those moralising  
 stars  
 We have got instead,—that poor lost  
 day, you said  
 Some words as truthful as the thing  
 of mine  
 You care to keep in memory and I  
 hold  
 If I, that day, and, being the girl I  
 was  
 Had shown a gentler spirit, less arro-  
 gance,  
 It had not hurt me Ah, you'll not  
 mistake  
 The point here I but only think,  
 you see,  
 More justly, that's more humbly, of  
 myself  
 Than when I tried a crown on and  
 supposed  
 Nay, laugh, sir,—I'll laugh with you !  
 —pray you, laugh  
 I've had so many birthdays since that  
 day,  
 I've learnt to prize mirth's oppor-  
 tunities,  
 Which come too seldom Was it you  
 who said  
 I was not changed ? the same Aurora ?  
 Ah,

We could laugh there, too ! Why,  
 Ulysses' dog  
 Knew *him*, and wagged his tail and  
 died but if  
 I had owned a dog, I too, before my  
 Troy,  
 And, if you brought him here, I  
 warrant you  
 He'd look into my face, bark lustily,  
 And live on stoutly as the creatures  
 will  
 Whose spirits are not troubled by  
 long loves  
 A dog would never know me, I'm so  
 changed,  
 Much less a friend except that  
 you're misled  
 By the colour of the hair, the trick of  
 the voice,  
 Like that Aurora Leigh's "  
 "Sweet trick of voice !  
 I would be a dog for this, to know it  
 at last,  
 And die upon the falls of it O love,  
 O best Aurora ! are you then so sad,  
 You scarcely had been sadder as my  
 wife ? "

"Your wife, sir ! I must certainly  
 be changed,  
 If I, Aurora, can have said a thing  
 So light, it catches at the knightly  
 spurs  
 Of a noble gentleman like Romney  
 Leigh,  
 And trips him from his honourable  
 sense  
 Of what befits "  
 "You wholly misconceive,"  
 He answered  
 I returned,—"I'm glad of it,  
 But keep from misconception, too,  
 yourself  
 I am not humbled to so low a point,  
 Nor so far saddened If I am sad at  
 all,  
 Ten layers of birthdays on a woman's  
 head,  
 Are apt to fossilise her girlish mirth,  
 Though ne'er so merry I m perforce  
 more wise,  
 And that, in truth, means sadder  
 For the rest,  
 Look here, sir I was right upon the  
 whole,

That birthday morning 'Tis impos-  
 sible  
 To get at men excepting through  
 their souls,  
 However open their carnivorous  
 jaws,  
 And poets get directlier at the soul,  
 Than any of our economists—for  
 which,  
 You must not overlook the poet's  
 work  
 When scheming for the world's neces-  
 sities  
 The soul's the way Not even Christ  
 Himself  
 Can save a man else than as He holds  
 man's soul,  
 And therefore did He come into our  
 flesh,  
 As some wise hunter creeping on his  
 knees  
 With a torch, into the blackness of  
 some cave,  
 To face and quell the beast there,—  
 take the soul,  
 And so possess the whole man, body  
 and soul  
 I said, so far, right, yes, not farther,  
 though  
 We both were wrong that June-day,  
 —both as wrong  
 As an east wind had been I who  
 talked of art,  
 And you who grieved for all men's  
 griefs what then?  
 We surely make too small a part for  
 God  
 In these things What we are, im-  
 ports us more  
 Than what we eat, and life, you've  
 granted me  
 Develops from within But innermost  
 Of the inmost, most interior of the  
 interne,  
 God claims His own, Divine humanity  
 Renewing nature,—or the piercingest  
 verse,  
 Prest in by subtlest poet, still must  
 keep  
 As much upon the outside of a man,  
 As the very bowl, in which he dips his  
 beard  
 —And then the rest I cannot  
 surely speak  
 Perhaps I doubt more than you  
 doubted then,

If I, the poet's veritable charge,  
 Have borne upon my forehead If I  
 have,  
 It might feel somewhat liker to a  
 crown  
 The foolish green one even—Ah, I  
 think,  
 And chiefly when the sun shines, that  
 I've failed  
 But what then, Romney? Though  
 we fail indeed,  
 You I a score of such  
 weak workers He  
 Fails never If He cannot work by us,  
 He will work over us Does He want  
 a man,  
 Much less a woman, think you? Every  
 time  
 The star winks there, so many souls  
 are born,  
 Who all shall work too Let our  
 own be calm  
 We should be ashamed to sit beneath  
 those stars,  
 Impatient that we're nothing "  
 "Could we sit  
 Just so for ever, sweetest friend," he  
 said,  
 "My failure would seem better than  
 success  
 And yet, indeed, your book has dealt  
 with me  
 More gently, cousin, than you ever  
 will!  
 The book brought down entire the  
 bright June-day,  
 And set me wandering in the garden-  
 walks,  
 And let me watch the garland in a  
 place,  
 You blushed so nay, forgive  
 me, do not stir  
 I only thank the book for what it  
 taught,  
 And what, permitted Poet, doubt  
 yourself,  
 But never doubt that you're a poet  
 to me  
 From henceforth Ah, you've writ-  
 ten poems, sweet,  
 Which moved me in secret, as the sap  
 is moved  
 In still March-branches, signless as a  
 stone  
 But this last book o'ercame me like  
 soft rain

Which falls at midnight, when the  
tightened bark  
Breaks out into unhesitating buds,  
And sudden protestations of the  
spring  
In all your other books, I saw but  
*you*  
A man may see the moon so, in a  
pond,  
And not be nearer therefore to the  
moon,  
Nor use the sight except to  
drown himself  
And so I forced my heart back from  
the sight  
For what had *I*, I thought, to do  
with *her*,—  
Aurora Romney? But, in this  
last book,  
You showed me something separate  
from yourself,  
Beyond you, and I bore to take it in,  
And let it draw me You have shown  
me truths,  
O June-day friend, that help me now  
at night,  
When June is over! truths not yours,  
indeed,  
But set within my reach by means of  
you  
Presented by your voice and verse the  
way  
To take them clearest Verily I was  
wrong,  
And verily, many thinkers of this age,  
Ay, many Christian teachers, half in  
heaven,  
Are wrong in just my sense, who  
understood  
Our natural world too insularly, as if  
No spiritual counterpart completed it  
Consummating its meaning, rounding  
all  
To justice and perfection, line by line,  
Form by form, nothing single, nor  
alone,—  
The great below clenched by the great  
above,  
Shade here authenticating substance  
there,  
The body proving spirit, as the effect  
The cause we, meantime, being too  
grossly apt  
To hold the natural, as dogs a bone  
(Though reason and nature beat us in  
the face),

So obstinately, that we'll break our  
teeth  
Or ever we let go For everywhere  
We're too materialistic,—eating clay  
(Like men of the west) instead of  
Adam's corn  
And Noah's wine, clay by handfuls,  
clay by lumps,  
Until we're filled up to the throat  
with clay,  
And grow the grimy colour of the  
ground  
On which we are feeding Ay, materi-  
alist  
The age's name is God Himself,  
with some,  
Is apprehended as the bare result  
Of what His hand materially has  
made,  
Expressed in such an algebraic sign,  
Called God,—that is, to put it other-  
wise,  
They add up nature to a naught of  
God  
And cross the quotient There are  
many, even,  
Whose names are written in the  
Christian church  
To no dishonour,—diet still on mud,  
And splash the altars with it You  
might think  
The clay, Christ laid upon their eye-  
lids when,  
Still blind, He called them to the use  
of sight,  
Remained there to retard its exercise  
With clogging incrustations Close  
to heaven,  
They see, for mysteries, through the  
open doors,  
Vague puffs of smoke from pots of  
earthenware,  
And fain would enter, when their  
time shall come,  
With quite a different body than St  
Paul  
Has promised,—husk and chaff, the  
whole barley-corn,  
Or where's the resurrection? "  
"Thus it is,"  
I sighed And he resumed with  
mournful face  
"Beginning so, and filling up with  
clay  
The wards of this great key, the  
natural world,

And fumbling vainly therefore at the  
 lock  
 Of the spiritual,—we feel ourselves  
 shut in  
 With all the wild-beast roar of strug-  
 gling life,  
 The terrors and compunctions of our  
 souls,  
 As saints with lions,—we who are not  
 saints,  
 And have no heavenly lordship in our  
 stare  
 To awe them backward ! Ay, we are  
 forced, so pent,  
 To judge the whole too partially,  
 confound  
 Conclusions Is there any common  
 phrase  
 Significant, when the adverb's heard  
 alone,  
 The verb being absent, and the pro-  
 noun out ?  
 But we, distracted in the roar of life,  
 Still insolently at God's adverb  
 snatch,  
 And bruit against Him that His  
 thought is void,  
 His meaning hopeless,—cry, that  
 everywhere  
 The government is slipping from His  
 hand  
 Unless some other Christ say  
 Romney Leigh  
 Come up, and toil and toil, and  
 change the world,  
 For which the First has proved in-  
 adequate,  
 However we talk bigly of His work  
 And piously of His person We blas-  
 pheme  
 At last, to finish that doxology,  
 Despairing on the earth for which He  
 died  
 “ So now,” I asked, “ you have more  
 hope of men ? ”  
 “ I hope,” he answered “ I am come  
 to think  
 That God will have His work done, as  
 you said,  
 And that we need not be disturbed too  
 much  
 For Romney Leigh or others having  
 failed  
 With this or that quack nostrum,—  
 recipes

For keeping summits by annulling  
 depths,  
 For learning wrestling with long  
 lounging sleeves,  
 And perfect heroism without a scratch  
 We fail,—what, then ? Aurora, if I  
 smiled  
 To see you, in your lovely morning-  
 pride,  
 Try on the poet's wreath which suits  
 the noon,—  
 (Sweet cousin, walls must get the  
 weather-stain  
 Before they grow the ivy !) certainly  
 I stood myself there worthier of con-  
 tempt,  
 Self-rated, in disastrous arrogance,  
 As competent to sorrow for mankind  
 And even their odds A man may  
 well despair,  
 Who counts himself so needful to suc-  
 cess  
 I failed I throw the remedy back  
 on God,  
 And sit down here beside you, in good  
 hope ”  
 “ And yet, take heed,” I answered,  
 “ lest we lean  
 Too dangerously on the other side,  
 And so fail twice Be sure, no earn-  
 est work  
 Of any honest creature, howbeit weak,  
 Imperfect, ill-adapted, fails so much,  
 It is not gathered as a grain of sand  
 To enlarge the sum of human action  
 used  
 For carrying out God's end No  
 creature works  
 So ill, observe, that therefore he's  
 cashiered  
 The honest earnest man must stand  
 and work,  
 The woman also, ot le-wise she drops  
 At once below the dignity of man,  
 Accepting serfdom Free men freely  
 work  
 Whoever fears God, fears to sit at  
 ease ”  
 He cried, “ True After Adam, work  
 was curse,  
 The natural creature labours, sweats  
 and frets  
 But, after Christ, work turns to  
 privilege,

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| <p>And henceforth one with our humanity,<br/>         The Six-day Worker, working still in us,<br/>         Has called us freely to work on with Him<br/>         In high companionship So, happiest !<br/>         I count that Heaven itself is only work<br/>         To a surer issue Let us work, in deed,—<br/>         But, no more, work as Adam nor as Leigh<br/>         Erewhile, as if the only man on earth,<br/>         Responsible for all the thistles blown<br/>         And tigers couchant,—struggling in amaze<br/>         Against disease and winter,—snarling on<br/>         For ever, that the world's not paradise<br/>         Oh cousin, let us be content, in work,<br/>         To do the thing we can, and not presume<br/>         To fret because it's little 'Twill employ<br/>         Seven men, they say, to make a perfect pin<br/>         Who makes the head, content to miss the point,—<br/>         Who makes the point, agreed to leave the join<br/>         And if a man should cry, ' I want a pin,<br/>         And I must make it straightway, head and point,'—<br/>         His wisdom is not worth the pin he wants<br/>         Seven men to a pin,—and not a man too much !<br/>         Seven generations, haply, to this world,<br/>         To right it visibly, a finger's breadth,<br/>         And mend its rents a little Oh, to storm<br/>         And say,—' This world here is intolerable,<br/>         I will not eat this corn, nor drink this wine,<br/>         Nor love this woman, flinging her my soul<br/>         Without a bond for't, as a lover should,<br/>         Nor use the generous leave of happiness,</p> | <p>As not too good for using generously '—<br/>         (Since virtue kindles at the touch of joy<br/>         Like a man's cheek laid on a woman's hand,<br/>         And God, Who knows it, looks for quick returns<br/>         From joys) !— to stand and claim to have a life<br/>         Beyond the bounds of the individual man,<br/>         And raze all personal cloisters of the soul<br/>         To build up public stores and magazines,<br/>         As if God's creatures otherwise were lost<br/>         The builder surely saved by any means !<br/>         To think,—I have a pattern on my nail,<br/>         And I will carve the world new after it,<br/>         And solve so, these hard social questions—nay,<br/>         Impossible social questions,—since their roots<br/>         Strike deep in Evil's own existence here,<br/>         Which God permits because the question's hard<br/>         To abolish evil nor attain free-will<br/>         Ay, hard to God, but not to Romney Leigh !<br/>         For Romney has a pattern on his nail<br/>         (Whatever may be lacking on the Mount),<br/>         And not being over nice to separate<br/>         What's element from what's convention, hastes<br/>         By line on line to draw you out a world,<br/>         Without your help indeed, unless you take<br/>         His yoke upon you and will learn of him,—<br/>         So much he has to teach ! so good a world !<br/>         The same, the whole creation's groaning for !<br/>         No rich nor poor, no gain nor loss nor stint,<br/>         No pottage in it able to exclude<br/>         A brother's birthright, and no right of birth,</p> |
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The pottage,—both secured to every man  
 And perfect virtue dealt out like the rest,  
 Gratuitously, with the soup at six  
 To whoso does not seek it "  
 "Softly, sir "  
 I interrupted,—“ I had a cousin once  
 I held in reverence If he strained  
 too wide  
 It was not to take honour, but give  
 help,  
 The gesture was heroic If his  
 hand  
 Accomplished nothing (well, it  
 is not proved)  
 That empty hand thrown im-  
 pottently out  
 Were sooner caught, I think, by One  
 in heaven,  
 Than many a hand that reaped a  
 harvest in  
 And keeps the scythe's glow on it  
 Pray you, then  
 For my sake merely, use less bitter-  
 ness  
 In speaking of my cousin  
 "Ah " he said,  
 "Aurora! when the prophet beats  
 the ass  
 The angel intercedes " He shook his  
 head—  
 "And yet to mean so well, and fail so  
 foul,  
 Expresses ne'er another beast than  
 man,  
 The antithesis is human Hearken,  
 dear,  
 There's too much abstract willing  
 purposing,  
 In this poor world We talk by ag-  
 gregates  
 And think by systems, and, being  
 used to face  
 Our evils in statistics, are inclined  
 To cap them with unreal remedies  
 Drawn out in haste on the other side  
 the slate "  
 "That's true " I answered, fain to  
 throw up thought  
 And make a game of't, "Oh, we  
 generalise  
 Enough to please you If we pray at  
 all  
 We pray no longer for our daily bread,

But next century's harvests If  
 we give  
 Our cup of water is not tendered till  
 We lay down pipes and found a Com-  
 pany  
 With Branches Ass or angel, 'tis the  
 same  
 A woman cannot do the thing she  
 ought,  
 Which means whatever perfect thing  
 she can  
 In life, in art, in science but she fears  
 To let the perfect action take her  
 part  
 And rest there she must prove what  
 she can do  
 Before she does it,—prate of woman's  
 rights  
 Of woman's mission, woman's func-  
 tion, till  
 The men (who are prating, too, on  
 their side) cry  
 'A woman's function plainly is  
 to talk '  
 Poor souls they are very reasonably  
 vexed '  
 They cannot hear each other speak "  
 "And you,  
 An artist, judge so? "  
 "I an artist,—yes,  
 Because, precisely, I'm an artist, sir,  
 And woman,—if another sate in sight  
 I'd whisper,—Soft, my sister! not a  
 word!  
 By speaking we prove only we can  
 speak,  
 Which he, the man here, never  
 doubted What  
 He doubts, is whether he can *do* the  
 thing  
 With decent grace, we've not yet  
 done at all  
 Now do it, bring your statue—you  
 have room!  
 He'll see it even by the starlight here,  
 And if 'tis e'er so little like the god  
 Who looks out from the marble  
 silently  
 Along the track of his own shining  
 dart  
 Through the dusk of ages,—there's  
 no need to speak,  
 The universe shall henceforth speak  
 for you,  
 And witness, 'She who did this thing,  
 was born

To do it,—claims her license in her work'  
 —And so with more works Whoso cures the plague,  
 Though twice a woman, shall be called a leech  
 Who rights a land's finances, is excused  
 For touching coppers, though her hands be white —  
 But we we talk ! "  
     " It is the age's mood "  
 He said, " we boast, and do not We put up  
 Hostelry signs where'er we lodge a day —  
 Some red colossal cow, with mighty paps  
 A Cyclops' fingers could not strain to milk,  
 Then bring out presently our saucer-full  
 Of curds We want more quiet in our works,  
 More knowledge of the bounds in which we work,  
 More knowledge that each individual man  
 Remains an Adam to the general race,  
 Constrained to see, like Adam, that he keep  
 His personal state's condition honest,  
 Or vain all thoughts of his to help the world,  
 Which still must be developed from its one,  
 If bettered in its many We, indeed  
 Who think to lay it out new like a park,  
 We take a work on us which is not man's,  
 For God alone sits far enough above,  
 To speculate so largely None of us  
 (Not Romney Leigh) is mad enough to say,  
 ' We'll have a grove of oaks upon that slope  
 And sink the need of acorns ' Government,  
 If veritable and lawful, is not given  
 By imposition of the foreign hand,—  
 Nor chosen from a pretty pattern-book  
 Of some domestic ideologue, who sits

And coldly chooses empire, where as well  
 He might republic Genuine government  
 Is but the expression of a nation, good  
 Or less good,—even as all society,  
 Howe'er unequal, monstrous, crazed, and cursed,  
 Is but the expression of men's single lives,  
 The loud sum of the silent units  
 What !  
 We'd change the aggregate and yet retain  
 Each separate figure ? Whom do we cheat by that ?  
 Now, not even Romney "  
     " Cousin, you are sad  
 Did all your social labour at Leigh Hall  
 And elsewhere, come to nought then ? "  
     " It was nought,"  
 He answered mildly " There is room indeed,  
 For statues still, in this large world of God's  
 But not for vacuums,—so I am not sad  
 Not sadder than is good for what I am  
 My vain phalanstery dissolved itself,  
 My men and women of disordered lives,  
 I brought in orderly to dine and sleep.  
 Broke up those waxen masks I made them wear  
 With fierce contortions of the natural face,  
 And cursed me for my tyrannous constraint  
 In forcing crooked creatures to live straight,  
 And set the country hounds upon my back  
 To bite and tear me for my wicked deed  
 Of trying to do good without the church  
 Or even the squires, Aurora Do you mind  
 Your ancient neighbours ? The great book-club teems  
 With ' sketches,' ' summaries,' and ' last tracts ' but twelve,  
 On Socialistic troublers of close bonds



Betwixt the generous rich and grate-  
 ful poor  
 The vicar preached from 'Revela-  
 tion' (till  
 The doctor woke) and found me with  
 'The Frogs'  
 On three successive Sundays, ay, and  
 stopped  
 To weep a little (for he's getting old)  
 That such perdition should o'ertake a  
 man  
 Of such fair acres,—in the parish too!  
 He printed his discourses 'by re-  
 quest',  
 And if your book shall sell as his did  
 then  
 Your verses are less good than I sup-  
 pose  
 The women of the neighbourhood sub-  
 scribed,  
 And sent me a copy bound in scarlet  
 silk,  
 Tooled edges, blazoned with the arms  
 of Leigh  
 I own that touched me "  
 "What, the pretty ones?"  
 Poor Romney!"  
 "Otherwise the effect was small  
 I had my windows broken once or  
 twice  
 By Liberal peasants, naturally in-  
 censed  
 At such a vexer of Arcadian peace,  
 Who would not let men call their  
 wives their own  
 To kick like Britons,—and made ob-  
 stacles  
 When things went smoothly as a baby  
 dragged  
 Toward freedom and starvation,  
 bringing down  
 The wicked London tavern-thieves  
 and drabs,  
 To affront the blessed hillside drabs  
 and thieves  
 With mended morals, quotha,—fine  
 new lives!"  
 My windows paid for't I was shot  
 at, once,  
 By an active poacher who had hit a  
 harc  
 From the other barrel, tired of springe-  
 ing game  
 So long upon my acres, undisturbed,  
 And restless for the country's virtue,  
 (yet

He missed me)—ay, and pelted very  
 oft  
 In riding through the village 'There  
 he goes,  
 Who'd drive away our Christian  
 gentlefolks,  
 To catch us undefended in the trap  
 He baits with poisonous cheese, and  
 lock us up  
 In that pernicious prison of Leigh  
 Hall  
 With all h's murderers! Give an-  
 other name,  
 And say Leigh Hell, and burn it up  
 with fire'  
 And so they did, at last, Aurora "  
 "Did?"  
 "You never heard it, cousin?" Vin-  
 cent's news  
 Came stunted, then "  
 "They did? they burnt  
 Leigh Hall?"  
 "You're sorry, dear Aurora?" Yes,  
 indeed,  
 They did it perfectly a thorough  
 work,  
 And not a failure, this time Let us  
 grant  
 'Tis somewhat easier, though, to  
 burn a house  
 Than build a system—yet that's  
 easy, too,  
 In a dream Books pictures,—ay,  
 the pictures! what,  
 You think your dear Vandykes would  
 give them pause?  
 Our proud ancestral Leighs with  
 those peaked beards,  
 Or bosoms white as foam thrown up  
 on rocks  
 From the old-spent wave Such  
 calm defiant looks  
 They flared up with! now, never-  
 more they'll twit  
 The bones in the family-vault with  
 ugly death  
 Not one was rescued, save the Lady  
 Maud,  
 Who threw you down, that morning  
 you were born,  
 The undemiable lineal mouth and  
 chin,  
 To wear for ever for her gracious sake,  
 For which good deed I saved her the  
 rest went

And you, you're sorry, cousin Well,  
for me,  
With all my phalansterians safely out  
(Poor hearts they helped the burners,  
it was said,  
And certainly a few clapped hands  
and yelled),  
The ruin did not hurt me as it might,—  
As when for instance I was hurt one  
day  
A certain letter being destroyed In  
fact  
To see the great house flare so  
oaken floors  
Our fathers made so fine with rushes  
once,  
Before our mothers furbished them  
with trains,—  
Carved wainscots, panelled walls, the  
favourite slide  
For draining off a martyr (or a  
rogue),  
The echoing galleries half a half-mile  
long,  
And all the various stairs that took  
you up  
And took you down, and took you  
round about  
Upon their slippery darkness, recol-  
lect,  
All helping to keep up one blazing  
jest,  
The flames through all the casements  
pushing forth,  
Like red-hot devils crinkled into  
snakes,  
All signifying,—' Look you, Romney  
Leigh,  
We save the people from your sav-  
ing, here,  
Yet so as by fire ' we make a pretty  
show  
Besides,—and that's the best you've  
ever done '  
—To see this, almost moved myself to  
clap '  
The ' vale et plaude ' came, too, with  
effect,  
When in the roof fell, and the fire,  
that paused,  
Stunned momentarily beneath the  
stroke of slates  
And tumbling rafters, rose at once  
and roared,  
And wrapping the whole house  
(which disappeared

In a mounting whirlwind of dilated  
flame),  
Blew upward straight, its drift of  
fiery chaff  
In the face of Heaven which  
blanched, and ran up higher "

" Poor Romney ! "

" Sometimes when I dream,"  
he said,

" I hear the silence after, 'twas so still.  
For all those wild beasts, yelling,  
cursing round,

Were suddenly silent, while you  
counted five !

So silent, that you heard a young  
bird fall

From the top-nest in the neighbouring  
rookery

Through edging over-rashly toward  
the light

The old rooks had already fled too far,  
To hear the screech they fled with,  
though you saw

Some flying on still, like scatterings  
of dead leaves

In autumn-gusts, seen dark against  
the sky

All flying,—ousted, like the House of  
Leigh "

" Dear Romney ! "

" Evidently 'twould have been  
A fine sight for a poet sweet, like  
you

To make the verse blaze after I my-  
self,

Even I, felt something in the grand  
old trees,

Which stood that moment like brute  
Druid gods

Amazed upon the rim of ruin, where,  
As into a blackened socket, the great  
fire

Had dropped—still throwing up  
splinters now and then,

To show them grey with all their  
centuries,

Left there to witness that, on such a  
day

The house went out "

" Ah ! "

" While you counted five  
I seemed to feel a little like a Leigh,—  
But then it passed Aurora A child  
cried ,

|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
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| <p>And I had enough to think of what to do<br/>         With all those houseless wretches in the dark,<br/>         And ponder where they'd dance the next time they<br/>         Who had burnt the viol "</p> <p>" Did you think of that ?<br/>         Who burns his viol will not dance, I know,<br/>         To cymbals, Romney "</p> <p>" O my sweet sad voice "<br/>         He cried,— " O voice that speaks and overcomes !<br/>         The sun is silent, but Aurora speaks "</p> <p>" Alas " I said , " I speak I know not what<br/>         I'm back in childhood, thinking as a child,<br/>         A foolish fancy—will it make you smile ?<br/>         I shall not from the window of my room<br/>         Catch sight of those old chimneys any more "</p> <p>" No more," he answered " If you pushed one day<br/>         Through all the green hills to our fathers' house,<br/>         You'd come upon a great charred circle where<br/>         The patient earth was singed an acre round ,<br/>         With one stone-stair, symbolic of my life<br/>         Ascending, winding, leading up to nought !<br/>         'Tis worth a poet's seeing Will you go ? "</p> <p>I made no answer Had I any right<br/>         To weep with this man, that I dared to speak ?<br/>         A woman stood between his soul and mine,<br/>         And waved us off from touching evermore<br/>         With those unclean white hands of hers Enough<br/>         We had burnt our viols and were silent</p> <p style="text-align: right;">So,<br/>         The silence lengthened till it pressed<br/>         I spoke,</p> | <p>To breathe " I think you were ill afterward "</p> <p>" More ill " he answered, " had been scarcely ill<br/>         I hoped this feeble fumbling at life's knot<br/>         Might end concisely,—but I failed to die,<br/>         As formerly I failed to live —and thus<br/>         Grew willing, having tried all other ways,<br/>         To try just God's Humility's so good,<br/>         When pride's impossible Mark us, how we make<br/>         Our virtues, cousin, from our worn out sins,<br/>         Which smack of them from hence forth Is it right<br/>         For instance to wed here, while you love there ?<br/>         And yet because a man sins once, the sin<br/>         Cleaves to him, in necessity to sin ,<br/>         That if he sin not so to damn himself,<br/>         He sins so, to damn others with himself<br/>         And thus, to wed here, loving there, becomes<br/>         A duty Virtue buds a dubious leaf<br/>         Round mortal brows , your ivy's better, dear<br/>         —Yet she tis certain, is my very wife ,<br/>         The very lamb left mangled by the wolves<br/>         Through my own bad shepherding and could I choose<br/>         But take her on my shoulder past this stretch<br/>         Of rough uneasy wilderness, poor lamb,<br/>         Poor child, poor child ?—Aurora, my belov'd,<br/>         I will not vex you any more to-night ,<br/>         But, having spoken what I came to say<br/>         The rest shall please you What she can, in me —<br/>         Protection, tender liking, freedom, ease,<br/>         She shall have surely, liberally, for her<br/>         And hers Aurora Small amends they'll make</p> |
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For hideous evils (which she had not  
known  
Except by me) and for this imminent  
loss  
This forfeit presence of a gracious  
friend,  
Which also she must forfeit for my  
sake  
Since drop your hand in mine  
a moment sweet  
We're parting!—Ah, my snowdrop  
what a touch,  
As if the wind had swept it off! you  
grudge  
Your gelid sweetness on my palm but  
so,  
A moment? angry, that I could not  
bear  
You speaking, breathing, liv-  
ing, side by side  
With someone called my wife  
and live, myself?  
Nay, be not cruel—you must under-  
stand!  
Your lightest footfall on a floor of  
mine  
Would shake the house, my lintel  
being uncrossed  
'Gainst angels henceforth it is night  
with me,  
And so, henceforth I put the shutters  
up,  
Auroras must not come to spoil my  
dark!"

He smiled so feebly with an empty  
hand  
Stretched sideways from me,—as in-  
deed he looked  
To anyone but me to give him help,—  
And, while the moon came suddenly  
out full,  
The double-rose of our Italian  
moons  
Sufficient, plainly, for the heaven and  
earth  
(The stars, struck dumb and washed  
away in dews  
Of golden glory, and the mountains  
steeped  
In divine languor), he, the man, ap-  
peared  
So pale and patient, like the marble  
man  
A sculptor puts his personal sadness  
in

To join his grandeur of ideal  
thought—  
As if his mallet struck me from my  
height  
Of passionate indignation, I who had  
risen  
Pale—doubting, paused, Was  
Romney mad indeed?  
Had all this wrong of heart made  
sick the brain?

Then quiet, with a sort of tremulous  
pride  
"Go, cousin," I said coldly, "a fare-  
well  
Was sooner spoken 'twixt a pair of  
friends  
In those old days, than seems to suit  
you now  
Howbeit since then, I've writ a book  
or two  
I'm somewhat dull still in the manly  
art  
Of phrase and metaphor. Why,  
any man  
Can carve a score of white Loves out  
of snow  
As Buonarroti down in Florence  
there  
And set them on the wall in some safe  
shade  
As safe, sir, as your marriage! very  
good,  
Though if a woman took one from  
the ledge  
To put it on the table by her flowers,  
And let it mind her of a certain  
friend,  
'Twould drop at once (so better),  
would not bear  
Her nail-mark even, where she took it  
up  
A little tenderly, so best, I say  
For me I would not touch so light a  
thing  
And risk to spoil it half an hour be-  
fore  
The sun shall shine to melt it leave  
it there  
I'm plain at speech, direct in purpose:  
when  
I speak, you'll take the meaning as it  
is  
And not allow for puckerings in the  
silks

By clever stitches I'm a woman,  
 sir,  
 And use the woman's figures naturally,  
 As you, the male license So, I wish  
 you well  
 I'm simply sorry for the griefs you've  
 had—  
 And not for your sake only, but man-  
 kind's  
 This race is never grateful from the  
 first  
 One fills their cup at supper with pure  
 wine,  
 Which back they give at cross-time on  
 a sponge  
 In bitter vinegar "

" If gratefuller, "

He murmured,—" by so much less  
 pitiable !  
 God's self would never have come  
 down to die,  
 Could man have thanked Him for it "

" Happily "

'Tis patent that, whatever," I re-  
 sumed,  
 " You suffered from this thanklessness  
 of men  
 You sink no more than Moses' bul-  
 rush-boat,  
 When once relieved of Moses, for  
 you're light,  
 You're light, my cousin ! which is  
 well for you,  
 And manly For myself,—now mark  
 me, sir,  
 They burnt Leigh Hall, but if, con-  
 summated  
 To devils, heightened beyond Luci-  
 fers,  
 They had burnt instead a star or two,  
 of those  
 We saw above there just a moment  
 back  
 Before the moon abolished them,—  
 destroyed  
 And riddled them in ashes through a  
 sieve  
 On the head of the foundering uni-  
 verse,—what then ?  
 If you and I remained still you and I,  
 It would not shift our places as mere  
 friends,  
 Nor render decent you should toss a  
 phrase

Beyond the point of actual feeling !—  
 nay  
 You shall not interrupt me as you  
 said,  
 We're parting Certainly, not once  
 or twice,  
 To-night you've mocked me some-  
 what or yourself,  
 And I, at least, have not deserved it  
 so  
 That I should meet it unsurprised  
 But now,  
 Enough we're parting part-  
 ing Cousin Leigh,  
 I wish you well through all the acts of  
 life  
 And life's relations wedlock not the  
 least,  
 And it shall ' please me,' in your  
 words to know  
 You yield your wife, protection, free-  
 dom, ease,  
 And very tender liking May you  
 live  
 So happy with her, Romney, that  
 your friends  
 May praise her for it Meantime,  
 some of us  
 Are wholly dull in keeping ignorant  
 Of what she has suffered by you, and  
 what debt  
 Of sorrow your rich love sits down to  
 pay  
 But if 'tis sweet for love to pay its  
 debt,  
 'Tis sweeter still for love to give its  
 gift,  
 And you, be liberal in the sweeter  
 way,—  
 You can I think At least, as  
 touches me,  
 You owe her, cousin Romney, no  
 amends,  
 She is not used to hold my gown so  
 fast,  
 You need entreat her now to let it go,  
 The lady never was a friend of mine,  
 Nor capable,—I thought you knew as  
 much,—  
 Of losing for your sake so poor a prize  
 As such a worthless friendship Be  
 content,  
 Good cousin, therefore, both for her  
 and you !  
 I'll never spoil your dark, nor dull  
 your noon,

Nor vex you when you're merry, nor  
 when you rest  
 You shall not need to put a shutter up  
 To keep out this Aurora Ah, your  
 north "  
 Can make Auroras which vex no-  
 body,  
 Scarce known from evenings 'also, let  
 me say,  
 My larks fly higher than some win-  
 dows Right,  
 You've read your Leighs Indeed  
 'twould shake a house,  
 If such as I came in with outstretched  
 hand,  
 Still warm and thrilling from the  
 clasp of one  
 Of one we know to acknow-  
 ledge, palm to palm,  
 As mistress there the Lady Wal-  
 demar "

" Now God be with us " with a  
 sudden clash  
 Of voice he interrupted—" what  
 name's that ?  
 You spoke a name, Aurora "

" Pardon me,  
 I would that Romney, I could name  
 your wife  
 Nor wound you, yet be worthy "

" Are we mad ? "  
 He echoed—" wife ! mine ! Lady  
 Waldemar !  
 I think you said my wife " He  
 sprang to his feet,  
 And threw his noble head back to-  
 ward the moon  
 As one who swims against a stormy  
 sea  
 And laughed with such a helpless,  
 hopeless scorn,  
 I stood and trembled

" May God judge me so "  
 He said at last,—" I came convicted  
 here  
 And humbled sorely if not enough I  
 came  
 Because this woman from her crystal  
 soul  
 Had shown me something which a  
 man calls light  
 Because too, formerly, I sinned by  
 her  
 As, then and ever since, I have, by  
 God,

Through arrogance of nature,—  
 though I loved  
 Whom best, I need not say  
 since that is writ  
 Too plainly in the book of my mis-  
 deeds,  
 And thus I came here to abase myself,  
 And fasten, kneeling, on her regent  
 brows  
 A garland which I startled thence one  
 day  
 Of her beautiful June-youth But  
 here again  
 I'm baffled !—fail in my abasement  
 as  
 My aggrandisement there's no room  
 left for me,  
 At any woman's foot, who miscon-  
 ceives  
 My nature purpose, possible actions  
 What !  
 Are you the Aurora who made large  
 my dreams  
 To frame your greatness ? you con-  
 ceive so small ?  
 You stand so less than woman,  
 through being more,  
 And lose your natural instinct like a  
 beast,  
 Through intellectual culture ? since  
 indeed  
 I do not think that any common she  
 Would dare adopt such fancy-for-  
 gerics  
 For the legible life-signature of such  
 As I, with all my blots with all my  
 blots !  
 At last then, peerless cousin, we are  
 peers—  
 At last we're even Ah, you've left  
 your height,  
 And here upon my level we take  
 hands,  
 And here I reach you to forgive you,  
 sweet  
 And that's a fall, Aurora Long ago  
 You seldom understood me,—but,  
 before,  
 I could not blame you Then, you  
 only seemed  
 So high above, you could not see be-  
 low,  
 But now I breathe,—but now I par-  
 don !—nay  
 We're parting Dearest, men have  
 burnt my house,



Than even for harder service ' So I  
 read  
 Your book, Aurora, for an hour, that  
 day  
 I kept its pauses, marked its emphasis,  
 My voice, empaled upon rhyme's  
 golden hooks,  
 Not once would writhe, nor quiver,  
 nor revolt,  
 I read on calmly,—calmly shut it up,  
 Observing, ' There's some merit in the  
 book  
 And yet the merit in't is thrown  
 away  
 As chances still with women, if we  
 write  
 Or write not we want string to tie  
 our flowers,  
 So drop them as we walk, which  
 serves to show  
 The way we went Good morning,  
 Mister Leigh,  
 You'll find another reader the next  
 time  
 A woman who does better than to  
 love,  
 I hate she will do nothing very  
 well  
 Male poets are preferable, tiring less  
 And teaching more' I triumphed  
 o'er you both,  
 And left him  
 " When I saw him afterward,  
 I had read your shameful letter, and  
 my heart  
 He came with health recovered,  
 strong though pale,  
 Lord Howe and he, a courteous pair  
 of friends,  
 To say what men dare say to women,  
 when  
 Their debtors But I stopped them  
 with a word,  
 And proved I had never trodden such  
 a road,  
 To carry so much dirt upon my shoe  
 Then, putting into it something of  
 disdain,  
 I asked forsooth his pardon, and my  
 own,  
 For having done no better than to  
 love,  
 And that, not wisely,—though 'twas  
 long ago,  
 And though 'twas altered perfectly  
 since then

I told him, as I tell you now, Miss  
 Leigh,  
 And proved I took some trouble for  
 his sake  
 (Because I knew he did not love the  
 girl)  
 To spoil my hands with working in  
 the stream  
 Of that poor bubbling nature,—till  
 she went,  
 Consigned to one I trusted, my own  
 maid,  
 Who once had lived full five months  
 in my house  
 (Dressed hair superbly), with a lavish  
 purse  
 To carry to Australia where she had  
 left  
 A husband, said she If the creature  
 led,  
 The mission failed, we all do fail and  
 lie  
 More or less—and I'm sorry—which  
 is all  
 Expected from us when we fail the  
 most,  
 And go to church to own it What I  
 meant,  
 Was just the best for him, and me,  
 and her  
 Best even for Marian !—I am sorry  
 for't,  
 And very sorry Yet my creature  
 said  
 She saw her stop to speak in Oxford  
 Street  
 To one no matter! I had  
 sooner cut  
 My hand off (though 'twere kissed  
 the hour before,  
 And promised a pearl troth-ring for  
 the next)  
 Than crush her silly head with so  
 much wrong  
 Poor child! I would have mended it  
 with gold,  
 Until it gleamed like St Sophia's  
 dome  
 When all the faithful troop to morn-  
 ing prayer  
 But he he nipped the bud of such a  
 thought  
 With that cold Leigh look which I  
 fancied once,  
 And broke in, ' Henceforth she was  
 called his wife



His wife required no succour he  
 was bound  
 To Florence, to resume this broken  
 bond  
 Enough so Both were happy, he  
 and Howe,  
 To acquit me of the heaviest charge  
 of all—  
 At which I shot my tongue against  
 my fly  
 And struck him, ' Would he carry,—  
 he was just,—  
 A letter from me to Aurora Leigh,  
 And ratify from his authentic  
 mouth  
 My answer to her accusation '—  
 ' Yes,  
 If such a letter were prepared in  
 time '  
 —He's just, your cousin,—ay, abhor-  
 rently  
 He'd wash his hands in blood, to  
 keep them clean  
 And so, cold, courteous, a mere gentle-  
 man,  
 He bowed, we parted  
 " Parted Face no more,  
 Voice no more, love no more ' wiped  
 wholly out  
 Like some ill scholar's scrawl from  
 heart and slate,—  
 Ay, spit on and so wiped out utterly  
 By some coarse scholar ' I have been  
 too coarse  
 Too human Have we business, in  
 our rank,  
 With blood i' the veins ? I will have  
 henceforth none ,  
 Not even to keep the colour at my lip  
 A rose is pink and pretty without  
 blood ,  
 Why not a woman ? When we've  
 played in vain  
 The game, to adore,—we have  
 resources still,  
 And can play on at leisure, being  
 adored  
 Here's Smith already swearing at my  
 feet  
 That I'm the typic She Away with  
 Smith !—  
 Smith smacks of Leigh,—and, hence-  
 forth, I'll admit  
 No Socialist within three crinolines,  
 To live and have his being But  
 for you,

Though insolent your letter and  
 absurd,  
 And though I hate you frankly,—  
 take my Smith !  
 For when you have seen this famous  
 marriage tied,  
 A most unspotted Erle to a noble  
 Leigh  
 (His love astray on one he should not  
 love),  
 Howbeit you should not want his  
 love, beware,  
 You'll want some comfort So I  
 leave you Smith  
 Take Smith !—he talks Leigh's sub-  
 jects, somewhat wise  
 Adopts a thought of Leigh's, and  
 dwindles it ,  
 Goes leagues beyond, to be no inch  
 behind ,  
 Will mind you of him, as a shoe-  
 string may,  
 Of a man and women, when they  
 are made like you,  
 Grow tender to a shoe-string, foot-  
 print even,  
 Adore averted shoulders in a glass,  
 And memories of what, present once,  
 was loathed  
 And yet, you loathed not Romney,—  
 though you've played  
 At ' fox and goose ' about him with  
 your soul  
 Pass over fox, you rub out fox,—  
 ignore  
 A feeling, you eradicate it,—the act's  
 Identical  
 " I wish you joy, Miss Leigh  
 You've made a happy marriage for  
 your friend ,  
 And all the honour, well-assorted  
 love,  
 Derives from you who love him, whom  
 he loves !  
 You need not wish *me* joy to think of  
 it,  
 I have so much Observe, Aurora  
 Leigh ,  
 Your droop of eyelid is the same as  
 his,  
 And, but for you, I might have won  
 his love,  
 And, to you, I have shown my naked  
 heart,—  
 For which three things I hate, hate,  
 hate you Hush,

Suppose a fourth '—I cannot choose  
but think  
That, with him, I were virtuouser  
than you  
Without him so I hate you from  
this gulf  
And hollow of my soul, which opens  
out  
To what, except for you, had been my  
heaven,  
And is instead, a place to curse by!  
Love "

An active kind of curse I stood  
there cursed—  
Confounded I had seized and  
caught the sense  
Of the letter with its twenty stinging  
snakes,  
In a moment's sweep of eyesight, and  
I stood  
Dazed —" Ah!—not married "  
" You mistake," he said,  
" I'm married Is not Marian Erle  
my wife ?  
As God sees things, I have a wife and  
child,  
And I, as I'm a man who honours  
God,  
Am here to claim them as my child  
and wife "  
I felt it hard to breathe, much less to  
speak  
Nor word of mine was needed Some  
one else  
Was there for answering " Rom-  
ney," she began,  
" My great good angel, Romney "  
Then at first,  
I knew that Marian Erle was beauti-  
ful  
She stood there, still and pallid as a  
saint,  
Dilated, like a saint in ecstasy,  
As if the floating moonshine inter-  
posed  
Betwixt her foot and the earth, and  
raised her up  
To float upon it " I had left my  
child,  
Who sleeps," she said, " and, having  
drawn this way,  
I heard you speaking, friend!—  
Confirm me now  
You take this Marian, such as wicked  
men

Have made her, for your honourable  
wife ? "

The thrilling, solemn, proud, pathetic  
voice  
He stretched his arms out toward the  
thrilling voice,  
As if to draw it on to his embrace  
—" I take her as God made her, and  
as men  
Must fail to unmake her, for my  
honoured wife "

She never raised her eyes, nor took a  
step,  
But stood there in her place, and  
spoke again  
—" You take this Marian's child,  
which is her shame  
In sight of men and women, for your  
child,  
Of whom you will not ever feel  
ashamed ? "

The thrilling, tender, proud, pathetic  
voice  
He stepped on toward it, still with  
outstretched arms,  
As if to quench upon his breast that  
voice  
—" May God so father me, as I do  
him,  
And so forsake me as I let him feel  
He's orphaned haply Here I take  
the child  
To share my cup, to slumber on my  
knee,  
To play his loudest gambol at my  
foot,  
To hold my finger in the public ways,  
Till none shall need inquire, ' Whose  
child is this ?'  
The gesture saying so tenderly, ' My  
own ' "

She stood a moment silent in her  
place,  
Then, turning toward me, very slow  
and cold—  
—" And you,—what say you ?—  
will you blame me much,  
If, careful for that outcast child of  
mine,  
I catch this hand that's stretched to  
me and him,  
Nor dare to leave him friendless in  
the world

Where men have stoned me ? Have  
 I not the right  
 To take so mere an aftermath from  
 life,  
 Else found so wholly bare ? Or is it  
 wrong  
 To let your cousin, for a generous  
 bent,  
 Put out his ungloved fingers among  
 briars  
 To set a tumbling bird's-nest some-  
 what straight ?  
 You will not tell him, though we're  
 innocent  
 We are not harmless ? and that  
 both our harms  
 Will stick to his good smooth noble  
 life like burrs  
 Never to drop off though you shake  
 the cloak ?  
 You've been my friend you will not  
 now be his ?  
 You've known him, that he's worthy  
 of a friend,  
 And you're his cousin, lady, after  
 all,  
 And therefore more than free to take  
 his part,  
 Explaining, since the nest is surely  
 spoilt,  
 And Marian what you know her,—  
 though a wife  
 The world would hardly understand  
 her case  
 Of being just hurt and honest, while  
 for him,  
 'Twould ever twit him with his bas-  
 tard child  
 And married harlot Speak, while  
 yet there's time  
 You would not stand and let a good  
 man's dog  
 Turn round and rend him, because  
 his, and reared  
 Of a generous breed,—and will you  
 let his act,  
 Because it's generous ? Speak I'm  
 bound to you,  
 And I'll be bound by only you, in  
 this "

The thrilling, solemn voice, so pas-  
 sionless,  
 Sustained, yet low, without a rise  
 or fall,  
 As one who had authority to speak,

And not as Marian  
 I looked up to feel  
 If God stood near me, and beheld  
 His heaven  
 As blue as Aaron's priestly robe  
 appeared  
 To Aaron when he took it off to die  
 And then I spoke—" Accept the gift,  
 I say,  
 My sister Marian, and be satisfied  
 The hand that gives has still a soul  
 behind  
 Which will not let it quail for having  
 given,  
 Though foolish worldlings talk they  
 know not what,  
 Of what they know not Romney's  
 strong enough  
 For this do you be strong to know  
 he's strong  
 He stands on Right's side, never  
 flinch for him,  
 As if he stood on the other You'll be  
 bound  
 By me ? I am a woman of repute,  
 No fly-blow gossip ever specked my  
 life,  
 My name is clean and open as this  
 hand,  
 Whose glove there's not a man dares  
 blab about,  
 As if he had touched it freely —  
 here's my hand  
 To clasp your hand, my Marian,  
 owned as pure !  
 As pure,—as I'm a woman and a  
 Leigh !—  
 And, as I'm both, I'll witness to the  
 world  
 That Romney Leigh is honoured in  
 his choice,  
 Who chooses Marian for his honoured  
 wife "

Her broad wild woodland eyes shot  
 out a light,  
 Her smile was wonderful for rapture  
 " Thanks,  
 My great Aurora " Forward then  
 she sprang,  
 And dropping her impassioned spaniel  
 head  
 With all its brown abandonment of  
 curls  
 On Romney's feet, we heard the  
 kisses drawn

Through sobs upon the foot, upon the ground—  
 "O Romney! O my angel! O unchanged,  
 Though, since we've parted, I have past the grave!  
 But Death itself could only better thee,  
 Not change thee!—*Thee* I do not thank at all  
 I but thank God Who made thee what thou art,  
 So wholly Godlike!"

When he tried in vain  
 To raise her to his embrace, escaping thence  
 As any leaping fawn from a huntsman's grasp,  
 She bounded off and 'lighted beyond reach,  
 Before him, with a staglike majesty  
 Of soft, serene defiance,—as she knew  
 He could not touch her, so was tolerant  
 He had cared to try She stood there with her great  
 Drowned eyes, and dripping cheeks, and strange sweet smile  
 That lived through all, as if one held a light  
 Across a waste of waters,—shook her head  
 To keep some thoughts down deeper in her soul,—  
 Then, white and tranquil as a summer-cloud  
 Which, having rained itself to a tardy peace,  
 Stands still in heaven as if it ruled the day,  
 Spoke out again—"Although, my generous friend,  
 Since last we met and parted, you're unchanged,  
 And, having promised faith to Marian Erle,  
 Mantain it, as she were not changed at all,  
 And though that's worthy, though that's full of balm  
 To any conscious spirit of a girl  
 Who once has loved you as I loved you once,—  
 Yet still it will not make her if she's dead,

And gone away where none can give or take  
 In marriage,—able to revive, return  
 And wed you,—will it, Romney?  
 Here's the point,  
 O friend, we'll see it plainer you and I  
 Must never, never, never join hands so  
 Nay, let me say it,—for I said it first  
 To God, and placed it, rounded to an oath,  
 Far, far above the moon there, at His feet,  
 As surely as I wept just now at yours,—  
 We never, never never join hands so  
 And now, be patient with me, do not think  
 I'm speaking from a false humility  
 The truth is, I am grown so proud with grief,  
 And He has said so often through His nights  
 And through His mornings, 'Weep a little still  
 Thou foolish Marian, because women must,  
 But do not blush at all except for sin,'—  
 That I, who felt myself unworthy once  
 Of virtuous Romney and his high-born race,  
 Have come to learn a woman, poor or rich,  
 Despised or honoured, is a human soul,  
 And what her soul is,—that, she is herself  
 Although she should be spit upon of men,  
 As is the pavement of the churches here,  
 Still good enough to pray in And, being chaste  
 And honest, and inclined to do the right,  
 And love the truth, and live my life out green  
 And smooth beneath his steps, I should not fear  
 To make him, thus, a less uneasy time  
 Than many a happier woman Very proud

You see me Pardon, that I set a  
 trap  
 To hear a confirmation in your  
 voice  
 Both yours and yours It is so good  
 to know  
 'Twas really God Who said the same  
 before  
 For thus it is in heaven, that first  
 God speaks,  
 And then His angels Oh, it does me  
 good,  
 It wipes me clean and sweet from  
 devil's dirt,  
 That Romney Leigh should think  
 me worthy still  
 Of being his true and honourable wife !  
 Henceforth I need not say, on leaving  
 earth,  
 I had no glory in it For the rest,  
 The reason's ready (master, angel,  
 friend,  
 Be patient with me) wherefore you  
 and I  
 Can never, never, never join hands so  
 I know you'll not be angry like a  
 man  
 (For you are none) when I shall tell  
 the truth,—  
 Which is, I do not love you, Romney  
 Leigh,  
 I do not love you Ah well ! catch  
 my hands,  
 Miss Leigh, and burn into my eyes  
 with yours,—  
 I swear I do not love him Did I  
 once ?  
 'Tis said that women have been  
 bruised to death,  
 And yet, if once they loved, that love  
 of theirs  
 Could never be drained out with all  
 their blood  
 I've heard such things and pondered  
 Did I indeed  
 Love once ? or did I only worship ?  
 Yes,  
 Perhaps, O friend, I set you up so  
 high  
 Above all actual good or hope of good,  
 Or fear of evil, all that could be mine,  
 I haply set you above love itself  
 And out of reach of these poor woman's  
 arms,  
 Angelic Romney What was in my  
 thought ?

To be your slave, your help, your  
 toy, your tool  
 To be your love I never thought  
 of that  
 To give you love still less I  
 gave you love ?  
 I think I did not give you anything,  
 I was but only yours,—upon my  
 knees,  
 All yours, in soul and body, in head  
 and heart,—  
 A creature you had taken from the  
 ground  
 Still crumbling through your fingers  
 to your feet  
 To join the dust she came from  
 Did I love,  
 Or did I worship ? judge, Aurora  
 Leigh !  
 But, if indeed I loved, 'twas long ago,—  
 So long ! before the sun and moon  
 were made,  
 Before the hells were open,—ah,  
 before  
 I heard my child cry in the desert  
 night,  
 And knew he had no father It may  
 be,  
 I'm not as strong as other women are,  
 Who, torn and crushed, are not un-  
 done from love  
 It may be, I am colder than the dead,  
 Who, being dead, love always But  
 for me  
 Once killed this ghost of Marian  
 loves no more,  
 No more except the child !  
 no more at all  
 I told your cousin, sir, that I was  
 dead,  
 And now, she thinks I'll get up from  
 my grave,  
 And wear my chun-cloth for a wed-  
 ding-veil,  
 And glide along the churchyard like a  
 bride,  
 While all the dead keep whispering  
 through the withes,  
 ' You would be better in your place  
 with us,  
 You pitiful corruption ! ' At the  
 thought,  
 The damps break out on me like  
 leprosy,  
 Although I'm clean Ay, clean as  
 Marian Erle

As Marian Leigh, I know, I were not  
clean  
I have not so much life that I should  
love,  
Except the child Ah God ! I  
could not bear  
To see my darling on a good man's  
knees,  
And know by such a look, or such a  
sigh,  
Or such a silence, that he thought  
sometimes,  
' This child was fathered by some  
cursed wretch '  
For, Romney,—angels are less tender-  
wise  
Than God and mothers even you  
would think  
What *we* think never He is ours, the  
child,  
And we would sooner vex a soul in  
heaven  
By coupling with it the dead body's  
thought,  
It left behind it in a last month's  
grave,  
Than in my child, see other than  
my child  
We only, never call him father-  
less  
Who has God and his mother O my  
babe,  
My pretty, pretty blossom, an ill-  
wind  
Once blew upon my breast ! can any  
think  
I'd have another,—one called hap-  
pier,  
A fathered child, with father's love  
and race  
That's worn as bold and open as a  
smile,  
To vex my darling when he's asked  
his name  
And has no answer ? What ! a  
happier child  
Than mine, my best,—who laughed  
so loud to-night  
He could not sleep for pastime ? Nay,  
I swear  
By life and love, that, if I lived like  
some,  
And loved like *some* ay  
loved you, Romney Leigh,  
As some love (eyes that have wept  
so much see clear),

I've room for no more children in my  
arms,  
My kisses are all melted on one mouth,  
I would not push my darling to a  
stool  
To dandle babies Here's a hand,  
shall keep  
For ever clean without a marriage  
ring,  
To tend my boy until he cease to need  
One steady finger of it, and desert  
(Not miss) his mother's lap, to sit with  
men  
And when I miss him (not he me) I'll  
come  
And say, ' Now give me some of  
Romney's work,  
To help your outcast orphans of the  
world,  
And comfort grief with grief ' For  
you, meantime,  
Most noble Romney, wed a noble  
wife,  
And open on each other your great  
souls,—  
I need not farther bless you If I  
dared  
But strain and touch her in her  
upper sphere,  
And say, ' Come down to Romney—  
pay my debt ! '  
I should be joyful with the stream of  
joy  
Sent through me But the moon is  
in my face  
I dare not,—though I guess the name  
he loves,  
I'm learned with my studies of old  
days,  
Remembering how he crushed his  
under-lip  
When some one came and spoke, or  
did not come  
Aurora, I could touch her with my  
hand,  
And fly, because I dare not "  
She was gone  
He smiled so sternly that I spoke in  
haste  
" Forgive her—she sees clearly fo-  
herself  
Her instinct's holy "  
" I forgive ? " he said,  
" I only marvel how she sees so sure,  
While others " there he paused,  
—then hoarse, abrupt,—

"Aurora ! you forgive us, her and me ?  
 For her, the thing she sees, poor loyal  
     child,  
 If once corrected by the thing I know,  
 Had been unspoken, since she loves  
     you well,  
 Has leave to love you —while for  
     me, alas,  
 If once or twice I let my heart escape  
 This night      remember, where  
     hearts slip and fall  
 They break beside we're parting,—  
     parting,—ah,  
 You do not love, that you should  
     surely know  
 What that word means    Forgive,  
     be tolerant  
 It had not been, but that I felt myself  
 So safe in impuissance and despair,  
 I could not hurt you though I tossed  
     my arms  
 And sighed my soul out    The  
     most utter wretch  
 Will choose his postures when he  
     comes to die,  
 However in the presence of a queen,  
 And you'll forgive me some un-  
     seemly spasms  
 Which meant no more than dying  
     Do you think  
 I had ever come here in my perfect  
     mind,  
 Unless I had come here, in my settled  
     mind,  
 Bound Marian's, bound to keep the  
     bond, and give  
 My name, my house, my hand, the  
     things I could,  
 To Marian ? For even I could give  
     as much,  
 Even I, affronting her exalted soul  
 By a supposition that she wanted  
     these,  
 Could act the husband's coat and hat  
     set up  
 To creak i' the wind and drive the  
     world-crows off  
 From pecking in her garden    Straw  
     can fill  
 A hole to keep out vermin    Now,  
     at last,  
 I own heaven's angels round her life  
     suffice  
 To fight the rats of our society,  
 Without this Romney I can see it at  
     last ;

And here is ended my pretension  
     which  
 The most pretended    Over-proud  
     of course,  
 Even so !—but not so stupid  
     blind      that I,  
 Whom thus the great Taskmaster of  
     the world  
 Has set to meditate mistaken work,  
 My dreary face against a dim blank  
     wall  
 Throughout man's natural lifetime,  
     —could pretend  
 Or wish      O love, I have loved  
     you ! O my soul,  
 I have lost you !—but I swear by all  
     yourself,  
 And all you might have been to me  
     these years,  
 If that June-morning had not failed  
     my hope,—  
 I'm not so bestial, to regret that day  
 This night,—this night, which still to  
     you is fair,  
 Nay, not so blind, Aurora I attest  
 Those stars above us, which I cannot  
     see      "

" You cannot "
   
     " That if Heaven itself should  
     stoop,  
 Remix the lots, and give me another  
     chance,  
 I'd say, ' No other ! '—I'd record my  
     blank  
 Aurora never should be wife of mine "

' Not see the stars ? '
   
     " 'Tis worse still, not to see  
 To find your hand, although we're  
     parting, dear  
 A moment let me hold it, ere we part  
 And understand my last words—  
     these, at last !  
 I would not have you thinking, whe-  
     I'm gone,  
 That Romney dared to hanker for  
     your love,  
 In thought or vision, if attainable  
 (Which certainly for me it never  
     was),  
 And wish to use it for a dog to-day,  
 To help the blind man stumbling,  
     God forbid !  
 And now I know He held you in His  
     palm,

And kept you open-eyed to all my faults,  
 To save you at last from such a dreary end  
 Believe me, dear, that if I had known, like Him,  
 What loss was coming on me, I had done  
 As well in this as He has —Farewell, you,  
 Who are still my light,—farewell !  
 How late it is  
 I know that, now you've been too patient, sweet  
 I will but blow my whistle toward the lane,  
 And some one comes the same  
 who brought me here  
 Get in—Good-night "  
 " A moment Heavenly Christ !  
 A moment Speak once, Romney  
 'Tis not true  
 I hold your hands, I look into your face—  
 You see me ? "  
 " No more than the blessed stars  
 Be blessed too, Aurora Ah, my sweet,  
 You tremble Tender-hearted ! Do you mind  
 Of yore dear, how you used to cheat old John,  
 And let the mice out slyly from his traps,  
 Until he marvelled at the soul in mice  
 Which took the cheese and left the snare ? The same  
 Dear soft heart always ! 'Twas for this, I grieved  
 Howe's letter never reached you Ah, you had heard  
 Of illness,—not the issue not the extent  
 My life long sick with tossings up and down,  
 The sudden revulsion in the blazing house,—  
 The strain and struggle both of body and soul,  
 Which left fire running in my veins, for blood  
 Scarce lacked that thunderbolt of the falling beam,  
 Which nicked me on the forehead as I passed

The gallery-door with a burden Say heaven's bolt,  
 Not William Erle's, not Marian's father's, tramp  
 And poacher, whom I found for what he was,  
 And, eager for her sake to rescue him, Forth swept from the open highway of the world,  
 Road-dust and all,—till, like a woodland boar  
 Most naturally unwilling to be tamed,  
 He notched me with his tooth But not a word  
 To Marian ! and I do not think, besides,  
 He turned the tilting of the beam my way,—  
 And if he laughed, as many swear, poor wretch,  
 Nor he nor I supposed the hurt so deep  
 We'll hope his next laugh may be merrier,  
 In a better cause "  
 " Blind, Romney ? "  
 " Ah, my friend,  
 You'll learn to say it in a cheerful voice  
 I, too, at first desponded To be blind,  
 Turned out of nature, mulcted as a man,  
 Refused the daily largesse of the sun  
 To humble creatures ! When the fever's heat  
 Dropped from me, as the flame did from my house,  
 And left me ruined like it, stripped of all  
 The hues and shapes of aspectable life,  
 A mere bare blind stone in the blaze of day,  
 A man, upon the outside of the earth, As dark as ten feet under, in the grave,—  
 Why that seemed hard "  
 " No hope ? "  
 " A tear ! you weep,  
 Divine Aurora ? tears upon my hand !  
 I've seen you weeping for a mouse, a bird,—  
 But, weep for me, Aurora ? Yes, there's hope



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| <p>Not hope of sight,—I could be learned,<br/>         dear,<br/>         And tell you in what Greek and Latin<br/>         name<br/>         The visual nerve is withered to the<br/>         root,<br/>         Though the outer eyes appear indiffer-<br/>         ent,<br/>         Unspotted in their crystals But<br/>         there's hope<br/>         The spirit, from behind this de-<br/>         throned sense,<br/>         Sees, waits in patience, till the walls<br/>         break up<br/>         From which the bas-relief and fresco<br/>         have dropt<br/>         There's hope This man here, once<br/>         so arrogant<br/>         And restless, so ambitious, for his part,<br/>         Of dealing with statistically packed<br/>         Disorders (from a pattern on his<br/>         nail)<br/>         And packing such things quite an-<br/>         other way,—<br/>         Is now contented From his personal<br/>         loss<br/>         He has come to hope for others when<br/>         they lose,<br/>         And wear a gladder faith in what we<br/>         gain<br/>         Through bitter experience, compensa-<br/>         tion sweet,<br/>         Like that tear, sweetest I am quiet<br/>         now,—<br/>         As tender surely for the suffering<br/>         world,<br/>         But quiet,—sitting at the wall to<br/>         learn,<br/>         Content, henceforth, to do the thing I<br/>         can<br/>         For, though as powerless, said I, as a<br/>         stone,<br/>         A stone can still give shelter to a<br/>         worm,<br/>         And it is worth while being a stone for<br/>         that<br/>         There's hope, Aurora "</p> <p style="text-align: center;">"Is there hope for me ?<br/>         For me ?—and is there room beneath<br/>         the stone<br/>         For such a worm ?—And if I came<br/>         and said<br/>         What all this weeping scarce will let<br/>         me say,<br/>         And yet what women cannot say at<br/>         all,</p> | <p>But weeping bitterly (the pride<br/>         keeps up,<br/>         Until the heart breaks under it)<br/>         I love,—<br/>         I love you, Romney "</p> <p style="text-align: center;">" Silence ! " he exclaimed<br/>         " A woman's pity sometimes makes<br/>         her mad<br/>         A man's distraction must not cheat<br/>         his soul<br/>         To take advantage of it Yet, 'tis<br/>         hard—<br/>         Farewell, Aurora "</p> <p style="text-align: center;">" But I love you, sir ,<br/>         And when a woman says she loves a<br/>         man,<br/>         The man must hear her, though he<br/>         love her not,<br/>         Which hush ! he has leave<br/>         to answer in his turn ,<br/>         She will not surely blame him As<br/>         for me<br/>         You call it pity,—think I'm gener-<br/>         ous—<br/>         'Twere somewhat easier, for a woman<br/>         proud<br/>         As I am, and I'm very vilely proud,<br/>         To let it pass as such, and press on<br/>         you<br/>         Love born of pity,—seeing that<br/>         excellent loves<br/>         Are born so, often, nor the quicker<br/>         die,—<br/>         And this would set me higher by the<br/>         head<br/>         Than now I stand No matter let<br/>         the truth<br/>         Stand high , Aurora must be humble<br/>         no,<br/>         My love's not pity merely Obviously<br/>         I'm not a generous woman, never<br/>         was,<br/>         Or else, of old, I had not looked so<br/>         near<br/>         To weights and measures, grudging<br/>         you the power<br/>         To give, as first I scorned your power<br/>         to judge<br/>         For me, Aurora I would have no<br/>         gifts<br/>         Forsooth, but God's,—and I would<br/>         use <i>them</i>, too,<br/>         According to my pleasure and my<br/>         choice,<br/>         As He and I were equals,—you, be-<br/>         low,</p> |
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| <p>Excluded from that level of inter-<br/>change<br/>Admitting benefaction You were<br/>wrong<br/>In much ? you said so I was wrong<br/>in most<br/>Oh, most ! You only thought to<br/>rescue men<br/>By half-means, half-way, seeing half<br/>their wants,<br/>While thinking nothing of your per-<br/>sonal gain<br/>But I who saw the human nature<br/>broad,<br/>At both sides, comprehending, too,<br/>the soul's,<br/>And all the high necessities of Art,<br/>Betrayed the thing I saw, and<br/>wronged my own life<br/>For which I pleaded Passioned to<br/>exalt<br/>The artist's instinct in me at the cost<br/>Of putting down the woman's,—I for-<br/>got<br/>No perfect artist is developed here<br/>From any imperfect woman Flower<br/>from root,<br/>And spiritual from natural, grade by<br/>grade<br/>In all our life A handful of the<br/>earth<br/>To make God's image ! the despised<br/>poor earth,<br/>The healthy odorous earth,—I missed,<br/>with it,<br/>The divine Breath that blows the<br/>nostrils out<br/>To ineffable inflatus ay, the breath<br/>Which love is Art is much, but<br/>love is more<br/>O Art, my Art, thou'rt much, but<br/>Love is more !<br/>Art symbolises heaven, but Love is<br/>God<br/>And makes heaven I, Aurora, fell<br/>from mine<br/>I would not be a woman like the rest,<br/>A simple woman who believes in love,<br/>And owns the right of love because<br/>she loves,<br/>And, hearing she's beloved, is satis-<br/>fied<br/>With what contents God I must<br/>analyse,<br/>Confront, and question, just as if a<br/>fly</p> | <p>Refused to warm itself in any sun<br/>Till such was <i>in leone</i> I must fret<br/>Forsooth, because the month was<br/>only May,<br/>Be faithless of the kind of proffered<br/>love<br/>And captious, lest it miss my dig-<br/>nity,<br/>And scornful, that my lover sought a<br/>wife<br/>To use to use ! O Romney, O<br/>my love,<br/>I am changed since then, changed<br/>wholly—for indeed,<br/>If now you'd stoop so low to take my<br/>love,<br/>And use it roughly, without stint or<br/>spare,<br/>As men use common things with<br/>more behind<br/>(And, in this, ever would be more<br/>behind),<br/>To any mean and ordinary end,—<br/>The joy would set me like a star in<br/>heaven,<br/>So high up, I should shine because of<br/>height<br/>And not of virtue Yet in one re-<br/>spect,<br/>Just one beloved, I am in no wise<br/>changed<br/>I love you, loved you loved you<br/>first and last,<br/>And love you on for ever Now I<br/>know<br/>I loved you always, Romney She<br/>who died<br/>Knew that, and said so, Lady Walde-<br/>mar<br/>Knows that, and Marian I<br/>had known the same<br/>Except that I was prouder than I<br/>knew,<br/>And not so honest Ay, and, as I<br/>live,<br/>I should have died so, crushing in my<br/>hand<br/>This rose of love, the wasp inside and<br/>all,—<br/>Ignoring ever to my soul and you<br/>Both rose and pain,—except for this<br/>great loss,<br/>This great despair,—to stand before<br/>your face<br/>And know I cannot win a look of<br/>yours</p> |
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| <p>             You think, perhaps, I am not<br/>             changed from pride,<br/>             And that I chiefly bear to say such<br/>             words,<br/>             Because you cannot shame me with<br/>             your eyes ?<br/>             O calm, grand eyes, extinguished in a<br/>             storm,<br/>             Blown out like lights o'er melancholy<br/>             seas,<br/>             Though shrieked for by the ship-<br/>             wrecked,—O my Dark,<br/>             My Cloud,—to go before me every<br/>             day<br/>             While I go ever toward the wilder-<br/>             ness,—<br/>             I would that you could see me bare to<br/>             the soul !—<br/>             If this be pity 'tis so for myself,<br/>             And not for Romney <i>he</i> can stand<br/>             alone,<br/>             A man like <i>him</i> is never overcome<br/>             No woman like me, counts him piti-<br/>             able<br/>             While saints applaud him He mis-<br/>             took the world<br/>             But I mistook my own heart,—and<br/>             that slip<br/>             Was fatal Romney,—will you leave<br/>             me here ?<br/>             So wrong, so proud, so weak, so un-<br/>             consoled,<br/>             So mere a woman !—and I love you<br/>             so,—<br/>             I love you, Romney "<br/>             Could I see his face,<br/>             I wept so ? Did I drop against his<br/>             breast<br/>             Or did his arms constrain me ? Were<br/>             my cheeks<br/>             Hot, overflowed, with my tears, or<br/>             his ?<br/>             And which of our two large explosive<br/>             hearts<br/>             So shook me ? That, I know not<br/>             There were words<br/>             That broke in utterance melted,<br/>             in the fire,<br/>             Embrace, that was convulsion,<br/>             then a kiss<br/>             As long and silent as the ecstatic<br/>             night,—<br/>             And deep deep, shuddering breaths,<br/>             which meant beyond<br/>             Whatever could be told by word or<br/>             kiss           </p> | <p>             But what he said I have writ-<br/>             ten day by day,<br/>             With somewhat even writing Did I<br/>             think<br/>             That such a passionate rain would<br/>             intercept<br/>             And dash this last page ? What he<br/>             said, indeed,<br/>             I fain would write it down here like<br/>             the rest,<br/>             To keep it in my eyes, as in my ears,<br/>             The heart's sweet scripture, to be<br/>             read at night<br/>             When weary, or at morning when<br/>             afraid,<br/>             And lean my heaviest oath on when I<br/>             swear<br/>             That, when all's done, all tried, all<br/>             counted here,<br/>             All great arts, and all good philo-<br/>             sophies,—<br/>             This love just puts its hand out in a<br/>             dream,<br/>             And straight outreaches all things<br/>             What he said,<br/>             I fain would write But if an angel<br/>             spoke<br/>             In thunder, should we, haply, know<br/>             much more<br/>             Than that it thundered ? If a cloud<br/>             came down<br/>             And wrapt us wholly, could we draw<br/>             its shape,<br/>             As if on the outside, and not over-<br/>             come ?<br/>             And so he spake His breath against<br/>             my face<br/>             Confused his words, yet made them<br/>             more intense,—<br/>             As when the sudden finger of the<br/>             wind<br/>             Will wipe a row of single city-lamps<br/>             To a pure white line of flame, more<br/>             luminous<br/>             Because of obliteration, more in-<br/>             tense,—<br/>             The intimate presence carrying in<br/>             itself<br/>             Complete communication, as with<br/>             souls<br/>             Who, having put the body off, per-<br/>             ceive<br/>             Through simply being Thus, 'twas<br/>             granted me<br/>             To know he loved me to the depth<br/>             and height           </p> |
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Of such large natures, ever competent  
 With grand horizons by the land or  
 sea,  
 To love's grand sunrise Small  
 spheres hold small fires  
 But he loved largely, as a man can  
 love  
 Who baffled in his love, dares live his  
 life,  
 Accept the ends which God loves, for  
 his own,  
 And lift a constant aspect  
 From the day  
 I had brought to England my poor  
 searching face  
 (An orphan even of my father's grave)  
 He had loved me, watched me,  
 watched his soul in mine,  
 Which in me grew and heightened  
 into love  
 For he, a boy still, had been told the  
 tale  
 Of how a fairy bride from Italy  
 With smells of oleanders in her hair,  
 Was coming through the vines to  
 touch his hand,  
 Whereat the blood of boyhood on the  
 palm  
 Made sudden heats And when at  
 last I came,  
 And lived before him, lived, and  
 rarely smiled,  
 He smiled and loved me for the thing  
 I was,  
 As every child will love the year's  
 first flower  
 (Not certainly the fairest of the year,  
 But, in which the complete year  
 seems to blow),  
 The poor sad snowdrop,—growing be-  
 tween drifts,  
 Mysterious medium 'twixt the plant  
 and frost,  
 So faint with winter while so quick  
 with spring,  
 So doubtful if to thaw itself away  
 With that snow near it Not that  
 Romney Leigh  
 Had loved me coldly If I thought  
 so once,  
 It was as if I had held my hand in fire  
 And shook for cold But now I  
 understood  
 For ever, that the very fire and heat  
 Of troubling passion in him, burned  
 him clear,

And shaped to dubious order, word  
 and act  
 That, just because he loved me over  
 all,  
 All wealth, all lands, all social privi-  
 lege,  
 To which chance made him unex-  
 pected heir,—  
 And, just because on all these lesser  
 gifts,  
 Constrained by conscience and the  
 sense of wrong  
 He had stamped with steady hand  
 God's arrow-mark  
 Of dedication to the human need,  
 He thought it should be so too, with  
 his love,  
 He, passionately loving, would bring  
 down  
 His love, his life, his best (because the  
 best),  
 His bride of dreams, who walked so  
 still and high  
 Through flowery poems as through  
 meadow-grass,  
 The dust of golden lilies on her feet,  
 That *she* should walk beside him on  
 the rocks  
 In all that clang and hewing out of  
 men,  
 And help the work of help which was  
 his life,  
 And prove he kept back nothing,—  
 not his soul  
 And when I failed him,—for I failed  
 him, I—  
 And when it seemed he had missed  
 my love,—he thought,  
 "Aurora makes room for a working-  
 noon,"  
 And so, self-girded with torn strips of  
 hope,  
 Took up his life, as if it were for  
 death  
 (Just capable of one heroic aim),  
 And threw it in the thickest of the  
 world,—  
 At which men laughed as if he had  
 drowned a dog  
 No wonder,—since Aurora failed him  
 first!  
 The morning and the evening made  
 his day  
 But oh, the night! oh, bitter-sweet!  
 oh, sweet!

O dark, O moon and stars, O ecstasy  
 Of darkness! O great mystery of  
 love,—  
 In which absorbed, loss, anguish,  
 treason's self  
 Enlarges rapture,—as a pebble dropt  
 In some full wine-cup, over-brims  
 the wine!  
 While we two sate together, leaned  
 that night  
 So close, my very garments crept and  
 thrilled  
 With strange electric life, and both  
 my cheeks  
 Grew red, then pale, with touches  
 from my hair  
 In which his breath was, while the  
 golden moon  
 Was hung before our faces as the  
 badge  
 Of some sublime inherited despair,  
 Since ever to be seen by only one,—  
 A voice said, low and rapid as a  
 sigh,  
 Yet breaking, I felt conscious, from a  
 smile,—  
 "Thank God, who made me blind, to  
 make me see!  
 Shine on, Aurora, dearest light of  
 souls,  
 Which rul'st for evermore both day  
 and night!  
 I am happy "  
 I flung closer to his breast,  
 As sword that, after battle, flings to  
 sheath  
 And, in that hurtle of united souls,  
 The mystic motions which in common  
 moods  
 Are shut beyond our sense, broke in  
 on us,  
 And, as we sate, we felt the old earth  
 spin,  
 And all the starry turbulence of  
 worlds  
 Swing round us in their audient  
 circles, till  
 If that same golden moon were over-  
 head  
 Or if beneath our feet, we did not  
 know  
 And then calm, equal, smooth with  
 weights of joy,  
 His voice rose, as some chief musi-  
 cian's song

Amid the old Jewish temple's Selah-  
 pause,  
 And bade me mark how we two met  
 at last  
 Upon this moon-bathed promontory  
 of earth,  
 To give up much on each side, then  
 take all  
 "Beloved," it sang, "we must be  
 here to work,  
 And men who work, can only work  
 for men,  
 And, not to work in vain, must com-  
 prehend  
 Humanity, and, so, work humanly,  
 And raise men's bodies still by raising  
 souls,  
 As God did, first "  
 "But stand upon the earth,"  
 I said, "to raise them,—(this is  
 human too,  
 There's nothing high which has not  
 first been low,  
 My humbleness, said One, has made  
 me great!)"  
 As God did, last "  
 "And work all silently,  
 And simply," he returned, "as God  
 does all,  
 Distort our nature never, for our  
 work,  
 Nor count our right hands stronger  
 for being hoofs  
 The man most man, with tenderest  
 human hands,  
 Works best for men,—as God in  
 Nazareth "  
 He paused upon the word, and then  
 resumed,  
 "Fewer programmes, we who have  
 no prescience  
 Fewer systems, we who are held and  
 do not hold  
 Less mapping out of masses, to be  
 saved,  
 By nations or by sexes Fourier's  
 void,  
 And Comte is dwarfed,—and Cabet,  
 puerile  
 Subsist no rules of life outside of life,  
 No perfect manners, without Chris-  
 tian souls  
 The Christ Himself had been no Law-  
 giver,

Unless He had given the life, too,  
with the law "

I echoed thoughtfully—"The man,  
most man,  
Works best for men and, if most  
man indeed,  
He gets his manhood plainest from  
his soul  
While, obviously, this stringent soul  
itself  
Obeys our old rules of development,  
The Spirit ever witnessing in ours  
And Love, the soul of soul, within  
the soul,  
Evolving it sublimely First, God's  
love "

"And next," he smiled, "the love of  
wedded souls,  
Which still presents that mystery's  
counterpart  
Sweet shadow-rose, upon the water of  
life,  
Of such a mystic substance, Sharon  
gave  
A name to ' human, vital, fructuous  
rose,  
Whose calyx holds the multitude of  
leaves —  
Loves filial, loves fraternal, neigh-  
bour-loves,  
And civic all fair petals, all  
good scents,  
All reddened, sweetened from one  
central Heart ! "

"Alas," I cried, "it was not long ago,  
You swore this very social rose smelt  
ill "

"Alas," he answered, "is it a rose at  
all ?  
The filial's thankless, the fraternal's  
hard,  
The rest is lost I do but stand and  
think,  
Across dim waters of a troubled life  
The Flower of Heaven so vainly over-  
hangs,—  
What perfect counterpart would be in  
sight,  
If tanks were clearer Let us clean  
the tubes,  
And wait for rains O poet, O my  
love,

Since I was too ambitious in my deed,  
And thought to distance all men in  
success,

Till God came on me, marked the  
place, and said  
' Ill-doer, henceforth keep within  
this line,

Attempting less than others,'—and I  
stand

And work among Christ's little ones,  
content,—

Come thou, my compensation, my  
dear sight,

My morning-star, my morning ' rise  
and shine,

And touch my hills with radiance not  
their own ,

Shine out for two, Aurora, and fulfil  
My falling-short that must be ' work  
for two,

As I, though thus restrained, for  
two, shall love !

Gaze on, with inscient vision toward  
the sun,

And, from his visceral heat, pluck out  
the roots

Of light beyond him Art's a service,  
—mark

A silver key is given to thy clasp,  
And thou shalt stand unwearied,

night and day,  
And fix it in the hard, slow-turning  
wards,

And open, so, that intermediate door  
Betwixt the different planes of sen-  
suous form

And form insensuous, that inferior  
men

May learn to feel on still through these  
to those,

And bless thy ministration The  
world waits

For help Beloved, let us love so  
well,

Our work shall still be better for our  
love,

And still our love be sweeter for our  
work

And both, commended, for the sake of  
each,

By all true workers and true lovers  
born

Now press the clarion on thy woman's  
lip

(Love's holy kiss shall still keep con-  
secrate)

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| And breathe the fine keen breath<br>along the brass,<br>And blow all class-walls level as<br>Jericho's<br>Past Jordan, crying from the top of<br>souls,<br>To souls that they assemble on<br>earth's flats<br>To get them to some purer eminence<br>Than any hitherto beheld for clouds!<br>What height we know not,—but the<br>way we know,<br>And how by mounting aye, we must<br>attain,<br>And so climb on It is the hour for<br>souls,<br>That bodies, leavened by the will and<br>love,<br>Be lightened to redemption The<br>world's old,<br>But the old world waits the hour to be<br>renewed<br>Toward which, new hearts in indi-<br>vidual growth<br>Must quicken, and increase to multi-<br>tude<br>In new dynasties of the race of men,—<br>Developed whence, shall grow spon-<br>taneously<br>New churches, new economies, new<br>laws<br>Admitting freedom, new societies | Excluding falsehood He shall make<br>all new "<br>My Romney!—Lifting up my hand<br>in his,<br>As wheeled by Seeing spirits toward<br>the east,<br>He turned instinctively,—where, faint<br>and far,<br>Along the tingling desert of the sky,<br>Beyond the circle of the conscious<br>hills,<br>Were laid in jasper-stone as clear as<br>glass<br>The first foundations of that new,<br>near Day<br>Which should be bulged out of<br>heaven, to God<br>He stood a moment with erected<br>brows,<br>In silence, as a creature might, who<br>gazed<br>Stood calm, and fed his blind, majestic<br>eyes<br>Upon the thought of perfect noon<br>And when<br>I saw his soul saw,—“ Jasper first,” I<br>said,<br>“ And second, sapphire, third, chalce-<br>dony,<br>The rest in order, last, an ame-<br>thyst ” |
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## POEMS BEFORE CONGRESS

1860

## PREFACE

THESE poems were written under the pressure of the events they indicate, after a residence in Italy of so many years, that the present triumph of great principles is heightened to the writer's feelings by the disastrous issue of the last movement, witnessed from “ Casa Guidi Windows ” in 1849. Yet, if the verses should appear to English readers too pun-  
gently rendered to admit of a patriotic respect to the English sense of things, I will not excuse myself on such grounds, nor on the ground of my attachment to the Italian people,

and my admiration of their heroic constancy and union. What I have written has simply been written because I love truth and justice *quand même*,—“ more than Plato ” and Plato's country, more than Dante and Dante's country, more even than Shakespeare and Shakespeare's country.

And if patriotism means the flattery of one's nation in every case, then the patriot, take it as you please, is merely a courtier, which I am not, though I have written “ Napoleon III in Italy ”. It is time to limit the significance of certain terms,

or to enlarge the significance of certain things Nationality is excellent in its place, and the instinct of self-love is the root of a man, which will develop into sacrificial virtues. But all the virtues are means and uses, and, if we hinder their tendency to growth and expansion, we both destroy them as virtues, and degrade them to that rankiest species of corruption reserved for the most noble organisations. For instance, —non-intervention in the affairs of neighbouring states is a high political virtue, but non-intervention does not mean, passing by on the other side when your neighbour falls among thieves,—or Phariseism would recover it from Christianity. Freedom itself is virtue, as well as privilege, but freedom of the seas does not mean piracy, nor freedom of the land, brigandage, nor freedom of the senate, freedom to cudgel a dissident member, nor freedom of the press, freedom to calumniate and lie. So, if patriotism be a virtue indeed it cannot mean an exclusive devotion to one's country's interests,—for that is only another form of devotion to personal interests family interests, or provincial interests, all of which, if not driven past themselves, are vulgar and immoral objects. Let us put away the Little Peddlingtonism unworthy of a great nation, and too prevalent among us. If the man who does not look beyond this natural life is of a somewhat narrow order what must be the man who does not look beyond his own frontier or his own sea?

I confess that I dream of the day when an English statesman shall arise with a heart too large for England, having courage in the face of his countrymen to assert of some suggested policy,—“This is good for your trade this is necessary for your domination, but it will vex a people hard by, it will hurt a people farther off, it will profit nothing to the general humanity therefore, away with it!—it is not for you or for me.” When a British minister dares speak so, and when a British

public applauds him speaking, then shall the nation be so glorious, that her praise, instead of exploding from within, from loud civic mouths, shall come to her from without, as all worthy praise must, from the alliances she has fostered and from the populations she has saved.

And poets who write of the events of that time, shall not need to justify themselves in prefaces, for ever so little jarring of the national sentiment, imputable to their rhymes.

ROME, February, 1860

## NAPOLEON III IN ITALY

### I

EMPEROR, Emperor!  
From the centre to the shore,  
From the Seine back to the Rhine,  
Stood eight millions up and swore  
By their manhood's right divine

So to elect and legislate,  
This man should renew the line  
Broken in a strain of fate  
And leagued kings at Waterloo,  
When the people's hands let go  
Emperor  
Evermore

### II

With a universal shout  
They took the old regalia out  
From an open grave that day,  
From a grave that would not close,  
Where the first Napoleon lay  
Expectant, in repose,  
As still as Merlin, with his conquering  
face

Turned up in its unquenchable  
appeal  
To men and heroes of the advancing  
race,—

Prepared to set the seal  
Of what has been on what shall be.  
Emperor  
Evermore

### III

The thinkers stood aside  
To let the nation act  
Some hated the new-constituted  
fact  
Of empire, as pride treading on their  
pride  
Some quailed, lest what was poison-  
ous in the past



Should graft itself in that Druidic  
bough  
On this green now  
Some cursed, because at last  
The open heavens to which they had  
looked in vain  
For many a golden fall of marvellous  
rain  
Were closed in brass, and some  
Wept on because a gone thing could  
not come,  
And some were silent, doubting all  
things for  
That popular conviction,—ever-  
more Emperor

## IV

That day I did not hate  
Nor doubt, nor quail nor curse  
I, reverencing the people, did not bate  
My reverence of their deed and oracle,  
Nor vainly prate  
Of better and of worse  
Against the great conclusion of their  
will

And yet, O voice and verse,  
Which God set in me to acclaim and  
sing  
Conviction, exaltation, aspiration,  
We gave no music to the patent' thing,  
Nor spared a holy rhythm to throb  
and swim

About the name of him  
Translated to the sphere of domina-  
tion

By democratic passion !  
I was not used, at least,  
Nor can be, now or then,  
To stroke the ermine beast  
On any kind of throne  
(Though builded by a nation for its  
own),

And swell the surging choir for kings  
of men—  
" Emperor  
Evermore "

## V

But now, Napoleon, now  
That, leaving far behind the purple  
throne  
Of vulgar monarchs, thou  
Tread'st higher in thy deed  
Than star of throne can lead,  
To help in the hour of wrong  
The broken hearts of nations to be  
strong,—

Now, lifted as thou art  
To the level of pure song,  
We stand to meet thee on these Alpine  
snows !  
And while the palpitating peaks  
break out  
Ecstatic from somnambular repose  
With answers to the presence and  
the shout,  
We, poets of the people, who take  
part

With elemental justice, natural  
right,  
Join in our echoes also, nor refrain  
We meet thee, O Napoleon, at this  
height

At last, and find thee great enough to  
praise

Receive the poet's chrism, which  
smells beyond

The priest's, and pass thy ways,—  
An English poet warns thee to main-  
tain

God's word, not England's—let His  
truth be true

And all men liars ! with His truth  
respond

To all men's lie Exalt the sword  
and smite

On that long anvil of the Apennine  
Where Austria forged the Italian  
chain in view

Of seven consenting nations, sparks  
of fine

Admonitory light,  
Till men's eyes wink before convic-  
tions new

Flash in God's justice to the world's  
amaze,

Sublime Deliverer !—after many days  
Found worthy of the deed thou art  
come to do—

Emperor  
Evermore

## VI

But Italy, my Italy,  
Can it last, this gleam ?

Can she live and be strong,  
Or is it another dream

Like the rest we have dreamed so  
long ?

And shall it, must it be,  
That after the battle-cloud has  
broken

She will die off again  
Like the rain,

Or like a poet's song  
Sung of her, sad at the end  
Because her name is Italy,—  
Die and count no friend ?  
Is it true,—may it be spoken,—  
That she who has lain so still,  
With a wound in her breast,  
And a flower in her hand,  
And a grave-stone under her head,  
While every nation at will  
Beside her has dared to stand  
And flout her with pity and scorn,  
Saying " She is at rest,  
She is fair she is dead  
And, leaving room in her stead  
To Us who are later born,  
This is certainly best ! "  
Saying " Alas, she is fair,  
Very fair, but dead,  
And so we have room for the race "  
—Can it be true, be true,  
That she lives anew ?  
That she rises up at the shout of her  
sons,

At the trumpet of France,  
And 'lives anew ?—is it true  
That she has not moved in a trance,  
As in Forty-eight ?

When her eyes were troubled with  
blood

Till she knew not friend from foe,  
Till her hand was caught in a strait  
Of her cerement and baffled so  
From doing the deed she would ,  
And her weak foot stumbled across  
The grave of a king,  
And down she dropt at heavy loss,  
And we gloomily covered her face  
and said,

" We have dreamed the thing ,  
She is not alive, but dead "

VII

Now, shall we say  
Our Italy lives indeed ?  
And if it were not for the beat and  
bray  
Of drum and trump of martial men,  
Should we feel the underground heave  
and straim,  
Where heroes left their dust as a  
seed

Sure to emerge one day ?  
And if it were not for the rhythmic  
march

B P

Of France and Piedmont's double  
hosts,

Should we hear the ghosts  
Thrill through ruined aisle and arch,  
Throb along the frescoed wall,  
Whisper an oath by that divine  
They left in picture, book, and stone,  
That Italy is not dead at all ?  
Ay, if it were not for the tears in our  
eyes,

These tears of a sudden passionate joy,  
Should we see her arise

From the place where the wicked are  
overthrown,

Italy, Italy ? loosed at length  
From the tyrant's thrall,

Pale and calm in her strength ?

Pale as the silver cross of Savoy  
When the hand that bears the flag is  
brave,

And not a breath is stirring, save

What is blown

Over the war-trump's lip of brass,  
Ere Garibaldi forces the pass !

VIII

Ay, it is so, even so

Ay, and it shall be so

Each broken stone that long ago  
She flung behind her as she went  
In discouragement and bewilderment  
Through the carns of Time, and  
missed her way

Between to-day and yesterday,

Up springs a living man

And each man stands with his face in  
the light

Of his own drawn sword,  
Ready to do what a hero can  
Wall to sap, or river to ford,  
Cannon to front, or foe to pursue,  
Still ready to do, and sworn to be  
true,

As a man and a patriot can  
Piedmontese, Neapolitan,  
Lombard, Tuscan, Romagnole,  
Each man's body having a soul,—  
Count how many they stand,  
All of them sons of the land,  
Every live man there

Allied to a dead man below,  
And the deadest with blood to  
spare

To quicken a living hand  
In case it should ever be slow

M M

Count how many they come  
To the beat of Piedmont's drum,  
With faces keener and grayer  
Than swords of the Austrian slayer,  
All set against the foe

"Emperor  
Evermore"

## IX

Out of the dust, where they ground  
them,

Out of the holes, where they dogged  
them,

Out of the hulks, where they wound  
them

In iron, tortured and flogged them,

Out of the streets, where they chased  
them,

Taxed them and then bayonnetted  
them,—

Out of the homes, where they spied on  
them,

(Using their daughters and wives),

Out of the church, where they fretted  
them,

Rotted their souls and debased them

Trained them to answer with knives,

Then cursed them all at their  
prayers!—

Out of cold lands, not theirs,

Where they exiled them, starved  
them, lied on them,

Back they come like a wind, in vain  
Cramped up in the hills, that roars  
its road

The stronger into the open plain,

Or like a fire that burns the hotter

And longer for the crust of cinder,

Serving better the ends of the potter,

Or like a restrained word of God,

Fulfilling itself by what seems to  
hinder

"Emperor  
Evermore"

## X

Shout for France and Savoy!

Shout for the helper and doer

Shout for the good sword's ring,

Shout for the thought still truer

Shout for the spirits at large

Who passed for the dead this spring,

Whose living glory is sure

Shout for France and Savoy!

Shout for the council and charge!

Shout for the head of Cavour,

And shout for the heart of a King  
That's great with a nation's joy  
Shout for France and Savoy!

## XI

Take up the child, Macmahon,  
though

Thy hand be red

From Magenta's dead,

And riding on, in front of the troop,

In the dust of the whirlwind of war

Through the gate of the city of Milan,  
stoop

And take up the child to thy saddle-  
bow,

Nor fear the touch as soft as a flower

Of his smile as clear as a star!

Thou hast a right to the child we say,

Since the women are weeping for joy  
as those

Who by thy help and from this day,

Shall be happy mothers indeed

They are raining flowers from terrace  
and roof

Take up the flower in the child

While the shout goes up of a nation  
freed

And heroically self-reconciled,

Till the snow on that peaked Alp aloof

Starts as feeling God's finger anew,

And all those cold white marble fires

Of mounting saints on the Duomo  
spires

Flicker against the Blue

"Emperor  
Evermore"

## XII

Ay, it is He,

Who rides at the King's right hand!

Leave room to his horse and draw to  
the side,

Nor press too near in the ecstasy

Of a newly delivered impassioned  
land

He is moved, you see,

He who has done it all

They call it a cold stern face,

But this is Italy

Who rises up to her place!—

For thus he fought in his youth,

Of this he dreamed in the past,

The lines of the resolute mouth

Tremble a little at last

Cry, he has done it all!

"Emperor  
Evermore"

## XIII

It is not strange that he did it,  
 Though the deed may seem to strain  
 To the wonderful, unpermitted,  
 For such as lead and reign  
 But he is strange, this man  
 The people's instinct found him  
 (A wind in the dark that ran  
 Through a chink where was no door),  
 And elected him and crowned him  
 Emperor  
 Evermore

## XIV

Autocrat ? let them scoff,  
 Who fail to comprehend  
 That a ruler incarnate of  
 The people, must transcend  
 All common king-born kings  
 These subterranean springs  
 A sudden outlet winning,  
 Have special virtues to spend  
 The people's blood runs through him,  
 Dilates from head to foot,  
 Creates him absolute,  
 And from this great beginning  
 Evokes a greater end  
 To justify and renew him—  
 Emperor  
 Evermore

## XV

What ! did any maintain  
 That God or the people (think !)  
 Could make a marvel in vain ?—  
 Out of the water-lar there,  
 Draw wine that none could drink ?  
 Is this a man like the rest,  
 This miracle, made unaware  
 By a rapture of popular air,  
 And caught to the place that was  
 best ?  
 You think he could barter and cheat  
 As vulgar diplomats use,  
 With the people's heart in his breast ?  
 Prate a lie into shape  
 Lest truth should cumber the road,  
 Play at the fast and loose  
 Till the world is strangled with tape,  
 Maim the soul's complete  
 To fit the hole of a toad,  
 And filch the dogman's meat  
 To feed the offspring of God ?

## XVI

Nay, but he, this wonder,  
 He cannot palter nor prate,

Though many around him and under,  
 With intellects trained to the curve,  
 Distrust him in spirit and nerve  
 Because his meaning is straight  
 Measure him ere he depart  
 With those who have governed and  
 led,  
 Larger so much by the heart,  
 Larger so much by the head  
 Emperor  
 Evermore

## XVII

He holds that, consenting or dissident,  
 Nations must move with the time,  
 Assumes that crime with a precedent  
 Doubles the guilt of the crime,  
 —Denies that a slaver's bond,  
 Or a treaty signed by knaves  
 (*Quorum magna pars* and beyond  
 Was one of an honest name)  
 Gives an unexpugnable claim  
 To abolishing men into slaves  
 Emperor  
 Evermore

## XVIII

He will not swagger nor boast  
 Of his country's meeds, in a tone  
 Mismatching a great man most  
 If such should speak of his own,  
 Nor will he act, on her side,  
 From motives baser, indeed,  
 Than a man of a noble pride  
 Can avow for himself at need,  
 Never for lucre or laurels,  
 Or custom, though such should be  
 rife,  
 Adapting the smaller morals  
 To measure the larger life  
 He though the merchants persuade,  
 And the soldiers are eager for strife,  
 Finds not his country in quarrels  
 Only to find her in trade,—  
 While still he accords her such honour  
 As never to flinch for her sake  
 Where men put service upon her,  
 Found heavy to undertake  
 And scarcely like to be paid  
 Believing a nation may act  
 Unselfishly—shiver a lance  
 (As the least of her sons may, in  
 fact)  
 And not for a cause of finance  
 Emperor  
 Evermore

## XIX

Great is he,  
 Who uses his greatness for all  
 His name shall stand perpetually  
 As a name to applaud and cherish,  
 Not only within the civic wall  
 For the loyal, but also without  
 For the generous and free  
 Just is he,  
 Who is just for the popular due  
 As well as the private debt  
 The praise of nations ready to perish  
 Fall on him,—crown him in view  
 Of tyrants caught in the net,  
 And statesmen dizzy with fear and  
 doubt!  
 And though, because they are many,  
 And he is merely one,  
 And nations selfish and cruel  
 Heap up the inquisitor's fuel  
 To kill the body of high intents,  
 And burn great deeds from their place,  
 Till this, the greatest of any  
 May seem imperfectly done  
 Courage, whoever circumvents!  
 Courage, courage, whoever is base!  
 The soul of a high intent be it known  
 Can die no more than any soul  
 Which God keeps by Him under the  
 throne  
 And this at whatever interim,  
 Shall live and be consummated  
 Into the being of deeds made whole  
 Courage, courage! happy is he  
 Of whom (himself among the dead  
 And silent) this word shall be said  
 —That he might have had the world  
 with him  
 But chose to side with suffering men  
 And had the world against him  
 when  
 He came to deliver Italy  
 Emperor  
 Evermore

## THE DANCE

## I

You remember down at Florence our  
 Cascine,  
 Where the people on the feast-days  
 walk and drive  
 And, through the trees, long-drawn  
 in many a green way,  
 Or-roofing hum and murmur like a  
 hive,

The river and the mountains look  
 alive?

## II

You remember the piazzone there,  
 the stand-place  
 Of carriages a-brim with Florence  
 Beauties,  
 Who lean and melt to music as the  
 band plays,  
 Or smile and chat with some one  
 who afoot is,  
 Or on horseback, in observance of  
 male duties?

## III

'Tis so pretty, in the afternoons of  
 summer,  
 So many gracious faces brought to-  
 gether!  
 Call it rout, or call it concert they  
 have come here  
 In the floating of the fan and of the  
 feather  
 To reciprocate with beauty the fine  
 weather

## IV

While the flower-girls offer nosegays  
 (because *they* too  
 Go with other sweets) at every  
 carriage-door  
 Here, by shake of a white finger,  
 signed away to  
 Some next buyer, who sits buying  
 score on score,  
 Piling roses upon roses evermore

## V

And last season, when the French  
 camp had its station  
 In the meadow-ground, things  
 quickened and grew gayer  
 Through the mingling of the liberat-  
 ing nation  
 With this people groups of  
 Frenchmen everywhere,  
 Strolling gazing, judging lightly  
 "who was fair"

## VI

Then the noblest lady present took  
 upon her  
 To speak nobly from her carriage  
 for the rest,  
 "Pray these officers from France to  
 do us honour  
 By dancing with us straightway"—  
 The request

Was gravely apprehended as addressed

## vii

And the men of France bareheaded,  
bowing lowly,  
Led out each a proud signora to  
the space  
Which the startled crowd had rounded  
for them—slowly,  
Just a touch of still emotion in his  
face,  
Not presuming, through the symbol,  
on the grace

## viii

There was silence in the people  
some lips trembled,  
But none jested Broke the music,  
at a glance  
And the daughters of our princes,  
thus assembled,  
Stepped the measure with the  
gallant sons of France  
Hush ! it might have been a Mass,  
and not a dance

## ix

And they danced there till the blue  
that overskied us  
Swooned with passion, though the  
footing seemed sedate,  
And the mountains, heaving mighty  
hearts beside us,  
Sighed a rapture in a shadow, to  
dilate,  
And touch the holy stone where  
Dante sate

## x

Then the sons of France bareheaded,  
lowly bowing,  
Led the ladies back where kinsmen  
of the south  
Stood received them,—till, with  
burst of overflowing  
Feeling husbands, brothers,  
Florence's male youth,  
Turned, and kissed the martial  
strangers mouth to mouth

## xi

And a cry went up, a cry from all  
that people !  
—You have heard a people cheering,  
you suppose,  
For the Member, mayor with  
chorus from the steeple ?

This was different scarce as loud  
perhaps (who knows ?),  
For we saw wet eyes around us ere  
the close

## xii

And we felt as if a nation, too long  
borne in  
By hard wrongers, comprehending  
in such attitude  
That God had spoken somewhere  
since the morning,  
That men were somehow brothers,  
by no platitude,  
Cried exultant in great wonder  
and free gratitude

## A TALE OF VILLAGRANCA

## TOLD IN TUSCANY

## i

My little son, my Florentine,  
Sit down beside my knee,  
And I will tell you why the sign  
Of joy which flushed our Italy,  
Has faded since but yesternight,  
And why your Florence of delight  
Is mourning as you see

## ii

A great man (who was crowned one  
day)  
Imagined a great Deed  
He shaped it out of cloud and clay,  
He touched it finely till the seed  
Possessed the flower from heart and  
brain  
He fed it with large thoughts humane,  
To help a people's need

## iii

He brought it out into the sun—  
They blessed it to his face  
" O great pure Deed, that hast undone  
So many bad and base !  
O generous Deed, heroic Deed,  
Come forth, be perfected, succeed,  
Deliver by God's grace "

## iv

Then sovereigns, statesmen, north  
and south,  
Rose up in wrath and fear,  
And cried, protesting by one mouth,  
" What monster have we here ?  
A great Deed at this hour of day ?  
A great just Deed—and not for pay ?  
Absurd,—or insincere "

## V

" And if sincere, the heavier blow  
In that case we shall bear,  
For where's our blessed 'status quo,'  
Our holy treaties, where,—  
Our rights to sell a race, or buy,  
Protect and pillage, occupy,  
And civilise despair ? "

## VI

Some muttered that the great Deed  
meant  
A great pretext to sin,  
And others, the pretext, so lent,  
Was heinous (to begin)  
Volcanic terms of "great" and  
"just" ?  
Admit such tongues of flame, the  
crust  
Of time and law falls in

## VII

A great Deed in this world of ours ?  
Unheard of the pretence is  
It threatens plainly the great Powers,  
Is fatal in all senses  
A just Deed in the world ?—call out  
The rifles ! be not slack about  
The national defences

## VIII

And many murmured, " From this  
source  
What red blood must be poured ! "  
And some rejoined, " 'Tis even worse,  
What red tape is ignored ! "  
All cursed the Doer for an evil  
Called here, enlarging on the Devil,—  
There, monkeying the Lord !

## IX

Some said, it could not be explained,  
Some could not be excused,  
And others, " Leave it unrestrained,  
Gehenna's self is loosed "  
And all cried, " Crush it, maim it, gag  
it !  
Set dog-toothed lies to tear it ragged,  
Truncated and traduced ! "

## X

But He stood sad before the sun,  
(The peoples felt their fate)  
" The world is many,—I am one,  
My great Deed was too great  
God's fruit of justice ripens slow  
Men's souls are narrow, let them  
grow  
My brothers, we must wait "

## XI

The tale is ended, child of mine,  
Turned graver at my knee  
They say your eyes, my Florentine,  
Are English it may be  
And yet I've marked as blue a pair  
Following the doves across the square  
At Venice by the sea

## XII

Ah child ! ah child ! I cannot say  
A word more You conceive  
The reason now, why just to-day  
We see our Florence grieve  
Ah child, look up into the sky !  
In this low world, where great Deeds  
die,  
What matter if we live ?

## A COURT LADY

## I

HER hair was tawny with gold, her  
eyes with purple were dark,  
Her cheeks' pale opal burnt with a  
red and restless spark

## II

Never was lady of Milan nobler in  
name and in race,  
Never was lady of Italy fairer to see  
in the face

## III

Never was lady on earth more true as  
woman and wife,  
Larger in judgment and instinct,  
prouder in manners and life

## IV

She stood in the early morning, and  
said to her maidens " Bring  
That silken robe made ready to wear  
at the Court of the King

## V

" Bring me the clasps of diamond,  
lucid, clear of the mote,  
Clasp me the large at the waist, and  
clasp me the small at the throat

## VI

" Diamonds to fasten the hair, and  
diamonds to fasten the sleeves,  
Laces to drop from their rays, like a  
powder of snow from the eaves "

## VII

Gorgeous she entered the sunlight  
which gathered her up in a flame,  
While, straight in her open carriage,  
she to the hospital came

## VIII

In she went at the door, and gazing  
from end to end,  
"Many and low are the pallets, but  
each is the place of a friend"

## IX

Up she passed through the wards,  
and stood at a young man's bed  
Bloody the band on his brow, and  
livid the droop of his head

## X

Art thou a Lombard, my brother?  
Happy art thou," she cried,  
And smiled like Italy on him he  
d eamed in her face and died

## XI

Pale with his passing soul, she went  
on still to a second  
He was a grave hard man, whose  
years by dungeons were reckoned

## XII

Wounds in his body were sore,  
wounds in his life were sorer  
"Art thou a Romagnole?" Her  
eyes drove lightnings before her

## XIII

Austrian and priest had joined to  
double and tighten the cord  
Able to bind thee, O strong one,—  
free by the stroke of a sword

## XIV

"Now be grave for the rest of us,  
using the life overcast  
To ripen our wine of the present (too  
new) in glooms of the past"

## XV

Down she stepped to a pallet where  
lay a face like a girl's  
Young, and pathetic with dying,—a  
deep black hole in the curls

## XVI

"Art thou from Tuscany, brother?  
and seest thou, dreaming in pain,  
Thy mother stand in the piazza,  
searching the list of the slain?"

## XVII

Kind as a mother herself, she touched  
his cheeks with her hands  
"Blessed is she who has borne thee,  
although she should weep as she  
stands"

## XVIII

On she passed to a Frenchman, his  
arm carried off by a ball  
Kneeling "O more than my  
brother! how shall I thank thee  
for all?"

## XIX

"Each of the heroes around us has  
fought for his land and line,  
But *thou* hast fought for a stranger,  
in hate of a wrong not thine

## XX

"Happy are all free peoples, too  
strong to be dispossessed  
But blessed are those among nations,  
who dare to be strong for the  
rest!"

## XXI

Ever she passed on her way, and came  
to a couch where pined  
One with a face from Venetia, white  
with a hope out of mind

## XXII

Long she stood and gazed, and twice  
she tried at the name,  
But two great crystal tears were all  
that faltered and came

## XXIII

Only a tear for Venice?—she  
turned as in passion and loss,  
And stooped to his forehead and  
kissed it, as if she were kissing  
the Cross

## XXIV

Faint with that strain of heart she  
moved on then to another,  
Stern and strong in his death "And  
dost thou suffer, my brother?"

## XXV

Holding his hands in hers—"Out of  
the Piedmont lion  
Cometh the sweetness of freedom!  
sweetest to live or to die on"

## XXVI

Holding his cold rough hands,—  
"Well, oh, well have ye done  
In noble, noble Piedmont, who  
would not be noble alone"

## XXVII

Back he fell while she spoke She  
rose to her feet with a spring,—  
"That was a Piedmontese! and this  
is the Court of the King"



## AN AUGUST VOICE

"Una voce augusta"—MONITORE TOSCANO

I

You'll take back your Grand Duke ?

I made the treaty upon it  
Just venture a quiet rebuke ,

Dall' Ongaro write him a sonnet ,  
Ricasoli gently explain

Some need of the constitution

He'll swear to it over again

Providing an "easy solution "

You'll call back the Grand Duke

II

You'll take back your Grand Duke ?

I promised the Emperor Francis

To argue the case by his book ,

And ask you to meet his advances  
The Ducal cause, we know

(Whether you or he be the wronger),  
Has very strong points,—although

Your bayonets, there, have stronger

You'll call back the Grand Duke

III

You'll take back your Grand Duke ?

He is not pure altogether

For instance, the oath which he took

(In the Forty-eight rough weather)

He'd "nail your flag to his mast,"

Then softly scuttled the boat you

Hoped to escape in at last

And both by a "Proprio motu "

You'll call back the Grand Duke

IV

You'll take back your Grand Duke ?

The scheme meets nothing to shock  
it

In this smart letter look

We found in Radetsky's pocket

Where his Highness in sprightly style

Of the flower of his Tuscans wrote,

"These heads be the hottest in file ,

Prav shoot them the quickest "

Quote,

And call back the Grand Duke

V

You'll take back your Grand Duke ?

There *are* some things to object to

He cheated betrayed and forsook,

Then called in the foe to protect

you

He taxed you for wines and for meats

Throughout that eight years pas-  
time

Of Austria's drum in your streets—  
Of course you remember the last  
time

You called back your Grand Duke ?

VI

You'll take back the Grand Duke ?

It is not race he is poor in,

Although he never could brook

The patriot cousin at Turin

His love of kin you discern,

By his hate of your flag and me—

So decidedly apt to turn

All colours at the sight of the

Three <sup>1</sup>

You'll call back the Grand Duke

VII

You'll take back your Grand Duke ?

'Twas weak that he fled from the

Pitti ,

But consider how little he shook

At thought of bombarding your  
city !

And, balancing that with this,

The Christian rule is plain for us ,

Or the Holy Father's Swiss

Have shot his Perugians in vain for  
us

You'll call back the Grand Duke

VIII

Pray take back your Grand Duke

—I, too, have suffered persuasion

All Europe, raven and rook,

Screeched at me armed for your  
nation

Your cause in my heart struck spurs ,  
I swept such warnings aside for  
you

My very child's eyes, and Hers,

Grew like my brother's who died  
for you

You'll call back the Grand Duke ?

IX

You'll take back your Grand Duke ?

Mv French fought nobly with  
reason,—

Left many a Lombardy nook

Red as with wine out of season

Little we grudged what was done  
there,

Paid freely your ransom of blood

Our heroes stark in the sun there,

We would not recall if we could

You'll call back the Grand Duke ?

<sup>1</sup> The Italian tricolor red, green, and white

## X

You'll take back your Grand Duke ?  
 His son rode fast as he got off  
 That day on the enemy's hook,  
 When I had an epaulette shot off  
 Though splashed (as I saw him afar,  
 no,  
 Near) by those ghastly rains,  
 The mark, when you've washed him  
 in Arno,  
 Will scarcely be larger than Cain's  
 You'll call back the Grand Duke ?

## XI

You'll take back your Grand Duke ?  
 'Twill be so simple, quite beautiful  
 The shepherd recovers his crook,  
 If you should be sheep, and  
 dutiful  
 I spoke a word worth chalking  
 On Milan's wall—but stay,  
 Here's Poniatowsky talking,—  
 You'll listen to *him* to-day,  
 And call back the Grand Duke

## XII

You'll take back your Grand Duke ?  
 Observe, there's no one to force it,—  
 Unless the Madonna, Saint Luke  
 Drew for you, choose to endorse it  
 I charge you, by great Saint Martino  
 And prodigies quickened by wrong,  
 Remember your Dead on Ticino,  
 Be worthy, be constant, be strong—  
 —Bah !—call back the Grand Duke !

## CHRISTMAS GIFTS

“*ὡς βασιλεῖ, ὡς θεῷ, ὡς νεκρῷ*  
 —GREGORY NAZIANZEN

## I

THE Pope on Christmas Day  
 Sits in Saint Peter's chair,  
 But the peoples murmur and say,  
 “Our souls are sick and forlorn,  
 And who will show us where  
 Is the stable where Christ was  
 born ?”

## II

The star is lost in the dark,  
 The manger is lost in the straw,  
 The Christ cries faintly hark !  
 Through bands that swaddle and  
 strangle—  
 But the Pope in the chair of awe  
 Looks down the great quadrangle

## III

The Magi kneel at His foot,  
 Kings of the East and West,  
 But, instead of the angels (mute  
 Is the “Peace on earth” of their  
 song),  
 The peoples, perplexed and opprest,  
 Are sighing, “How long, how long?”

## IV

And, instead of the kine, bewilder in  
 Shadow of aisle and dome,  
 The bear who tore up the children,  
 The fox who burnt up the corn,  
 And the wolf who suckled at Rome  
 Brothers to slay and to scorn

## V

Cardinals left and right of him,  
 Worshippers round and beneath,  
 The silver trumpets at sight of him  
 Thrill with a musical blast  
 But the people say through their  
 teeth,  
 “Trumpets ? we wait for the Last !”

## VI

He sits in the place of the Lord,  
 And asks for the gifts of the time ;  
 Gold, for the haft of a sword  
 To win back Romagna averse,  
 Incense, to sweeten a crime,  
 And myrrh, to embitter a curse

## VII

Then a king of the West said, “Good !—  
 I bring thee the gifts of the time ;  
 Red, for the patriot's blood,  
 Green, for the martyr's crown  
 White, for the dew and the rime,  
 When the morning of God comes  
 down”

## VIII

—O mystic tricolor bright !  
 The Pope's heart quailed like a  
 man's,  
 The cardinals froze at the sight,  
 Bowing their tansures hoary  
 And the eyes in the peacock-fans  
 Winked at the alien glory

## IX

But the peoples exclaimed in hope,  
 “Now blessed be he who has  
 brought  
 These gifts of the time to the Pope,  
 When our souls were sick and for-  
 lorn

—And *here* is the star we sought,  
To show us where Christ was born ! "

### ITALY AND THE WORLD

#### I

FLORENCE, Bologna, Parma, Modena  
When you named them a year ago,  
So many graves reserved by God, in a  
Day of judgment, you seemed to  
know,  
To open and let out the resurrection

#### II

And meantime (you made your  
reflection  
If you were English) was nought to  
be done  
But sorting sables, in predilection  
For all those martyrs dead and  
gone,  
Till the new earth and heaven made  
ready

#### III

And if your politics were not heady,  
Violent "Good," you added,  
"good  
In all things ! Mourn on sure and  
steady  
Churchyard thistles are wholesome  
food  
For our European wandering asses

#### IV

"The date of the resurrection passes  
Human fore-knowledge men un-  
born  
Will gain by it (even in the lower  
classes),  
But none of these It is not the  
morn  
Because the cock of France is crowing

#### V

"Cocks crow at midnight, seldom  
knowing  
Starlight from dawnlight 'tis a mad  
Poor creature " Here you paused,  
and growing  
Scornful suddenly, let us add,  
The trumpet sounded the graves  
were open

#### VI

Life and life and life ! agropo in  
The dusk of death, warm hands,  
stretched out  
For swords, proved more life still to  
hope in,

Beyond and behind Arise with  
a shout,  
Nation of Italy, slain and buried !

#### VII

Hill to hill and turret to turret  
Flashing the tricolor,—newly  
created  
Beautiful Italy, calm, unhurried,  
Rise heroic and renovated,  
Rise to the final restitution

#### VIII

Rise, prefigure the grand solution  
Of earth's municipal, insular  
schisms —  
Statesmen draping self-love's conclu-  
sion  
In cheap, vernacular patriotisms,  
Unable to give up Judæa for Jesus

#### IX

Bring us the higher example, release  
us  
Into the larger coming time  
And into Christ's broad garment  
piece us  
Rags of virtue as poor as crime,  
National selfishness, civic vaunting

#### X

No more Jew nor Greek then,—taunt-  
ing  
Nor taunted, —no more England  
nor France !  
But one confederate brotherhood  
planting  
One flag only, to mark the advance,  
Onward and upward, of all humanity

#### XI

For civilisation perfected  
Is fully developed Christianity  
"Measure the frontier," shall it be  
said,  
"Count the ships," in national  
vanity ?  
—Count the nation's heart-beats  
sooner

#### XII

For, though behind by a cannon or  
schooner,  
That nation still is predominant,  
Whose pulse beats quickest in zeal to  
oppugn or  
Succour another, in wrong or want,  
Passing the frontier in love and ab-  
horrence

## XIII

Modena, Parma, Bologna, Florence,  
 Open us out the wider way !  
 Dwarf in that chapel of old Saint  
 Lawrence  
 Your Michel Angelo's giant "Day"  
 With the grandeur of this Day break-  
 ing o'er us !

## XIV

Ye who, restrained as an ancient  
 chorus,  
 Mute while the coryphæus spake  
 Hush your separate voices before us,  
 Sink your separate lives for the  
 sake  
 Of one sole Italy's living for ever !

## XV

Givers of coat and cloak too,—never  
 Grudging that purple of yours at  
 the best,—  
 By your heroic will and endeavour  
 Each sublimely dispossessed,  
 That all may inherit what each sur-  
 renders !

## XVI

Earth shall bless you, O noble  
 emenders  
 On egotist nations ! Ye shall lead  
 The plough of the world, and sow  
 new splendours  
 Into the furrow of things, for seed,—  
 Ever the richer for what ye have  
 given

## XVII

Lead us and teach us, till earth and  
 heaven  
 Grow larger around us and higher  
 above  
 Our sacrament-bread has a bitter  
 leaven,  
 We bait our traps with the name of  
 love,  
 Till hate itself has a kinder meaning

## XVIII

Oh, this world this cheating and  
 screening  
 Of cheats ! this conscience for  
 candle-wicks,  
 Not beacon-fires ! this overweening  
 Of underhand diplomatical tricks,  
 Dared for the country while scorned  
 for the counter !

## XIX

Oh, this envy of those who mount  
 here,  
 And oh, this malice to make them  
 trip !  
 Rather quenching the fire there,  
 drying the fount here,  
 To frozen body and thirsty lip,  
 Than leave to a neighbour their  
 ministration

## XX

I cry aloud in my poet-passion,  
 Viewing my England o'er Alp and  
 sea  
 I loved her more in her ancient fashion  
 She carries her rifles too thick for  
 me  
 Who spares them so in the cause of a  
 brother

## XXI

Suspicion, panic ? end this pother  
 The sword, kept sheathless at  
 peace-time, rusts  
 None fears for himself while he feels  
 for another  
 The brave man either fights or  
 trusts,  
 And wears no mail in his private  
 chamber

## XXII

Beautiful Italy ! golden amber  
 Warm with the kisses of lover and  
 traitor !  
 Thou who hast drawn us on to re-  
 member,  
 Draw us to hope now let us be  
 greater  
 By this new future than that old story

## XXIII

Till truer glory replaces all glory,  
 As the torch grows blind at the dawn  
 of day,  
 And the nations rising up, their sorry  
 And foolish sins shall put away,  
 As children their toys when the  
 teacher enters

## XXIV

Till Love's one centre devour these  
 centres  
 Of many self-loves, and the  
 patriot's trick  
 To better his land by egotist ventures,  
 Defamed from a virtue, shall make  
 men sick,

As the scalp at the belt of some red  
hero

xxv

For certain virtues have dropped to  
zero,

Left by the sun on the mountain's  
dewy side,

Churchman's charities, tender as  
Nero,

Indian suttee, heathen suicide,

Service to rights divine, proved hollow

xxvi

And Heptarchy patriotisms must  
follow

—National voices, distinct yet  
dependent,

Enspiring each other, as swallow  
does swallow,

With circles still widening and ever  
ascendant

In multiform life to united progres-  
sion,—

xxvii

These shall remain And when, in  
the session

Of nations, the separate language  
is heard,

Each shall aspire, in sublime indis-  
cretion,

To help with a thought or exalt  
with a word

Less her own than her rival's honour

xxviii

Each Christian nation shall take upon  
her

The law of the Christian man in  
vast

The crown of the getter shall fall to  
the donor

And last shall be first while first  
shall be last,

And to love best shall still be, to reign  
unsurpassed

## A CURSE FOR A NATION

### PROLOGUE

I HEARD an angel speak last night,  
And he said, "Write!

Write a Nation's curse for me,  
And send it over the Western Sea"

I faltered, taking up the word

"Not so, my lord!

If curses must be, choose another  
To send thy curse against my brother

"For I am bound by gratitude,

By love and blood,

To brothers of mine across the sea,  
Who stretch out kindly hands to me"

"Therefore" the voice said, "shalt  
thou write

My curse to-night

From the summits of love a curse is  
driven,

As lightning is from the tops of  
heaven"

"Not so," I answered "Evermore

My heart is sore

For my own land's sins for little  
feet

Of children bleeding along the street

"For parked-up honours that gain-  
say

The right of way

For almsgiving through a door that is  
Not open enough for two friends to  
kiss

"For love of freedom which abates

Beyond the Straits

For patriot virtue starved to vice on  
Self-praise, self-interest, and suspi-  
cion

"For an oligarchic parliament,

And bribes well-meant

What curse to another land assign,  
When heavy-souled for the sins of  
mine?"

"Therefore," the voice said, "shalt  
thou write

My curse to-night

Because though hast strength to see  
and hate

A foul thing done *within* thy gate"

"Not so," I answered once again

"To curse, choose men

For I, a woman, have only known  
How the heart melts and the tears  
run down"

"Therefore," the voice said, "shalt  
thou write

My curse to-night

Some women weep and curse, I say  
(And no one marvels), night and day

"And thou shalt take their part to-  
night,

Weep and write

A curse from the depths of woman-  
hood  
Is very salt, and bitter, and good "  
So thus I wrote, and mourned indeed,  
What all may read  
And thus as was enjoined on me,  
I send it over the Western Sea

## THE CURSE

## I

BECAUSE ye have broken your own  
chain  
With the strain  
Of brave men climbing a Nation's  
height,  
Yet thence bear down with brand  
and thong  
On souls of others,—for this wrong  
This is the curse Write

Because yourselves are standing  
straight  
In the state  
Of Freedom's foremost acolyte  
Yet keep calm footing all the time  
On writhing bond-slaves—for this  
crime  
This is the curse Write

Because ye prosper in God's name,  
With a claim  
To honour in the old world's sight  
Yet do the fiend's work perfectly  
In strangling martyrs—for this lie  
This is the curse Write

## II

Ye shall watch while kings conspire  
Round the people's smouldering fire  
And, warm for your part,  
Shall never dare—O shame!  
To utter the thought into flame  
Which burns at your heart  
This is the curse Write

Ye shall watch while nations strive  
With the bloodhounds die or survive,  
Drop faint from their jaws,

Or throttle them backward to death,  
And only under your breath  
Shall favour the cause  
This is the curse Write

Ye shall watch while strong men draw  
The nets of feudal law  
To strangle the weak,  
And, counting the sin for a sin  
Your soul shall be sadder within  
Than the word ye shall speak  
This is the curse Write

When good men are praying erect  
That Christ may avenge His elect  
And deliver the earth,  
The prayer in your ears said low  
Shall sound like the tramp of a foe  
That's driving you forth  
This is the curse Write

When wise men give you their praise,  
They shall pause in the heat of the  
phrase,  
As if carried too far  
When ye boast your own charters  
kept true  
Ye shall blush,—for the thing which  
ye do  
Derides what ye are  
This is the curse Write

When fools cast taunts at your gate,  
Your scorn ye shall somewhat abate  
As ye look o'er the wall,  
For your conscience, tradition, and  
name  
Explode with a deadlier blame  
Than the worst of them all  
This is the curse Write

Go, wherever ill deeds shall be done,  
Go plant your flag in the sun  
Beside the ill-doers!  
And recoil from clenching the curse  
Of God's witnessing Universe  
With a curse of yours  
This is the curse Write

## LAST POEMS

1862

TO "GRATEFUL FLORENCE"  
TO THE MUNICIPALITY HER REPRESENTATIVE,  
AND TO TOMMASEO, ITS SPOKESMAN,  
MOST GRATEFULLY

## LAST POEMS

## ADVERTISEMENT

THESE Poems are given as they occur on a list drawn up last June. A few had already been printed in periodicals.

There is hardly such direct warrant for publishing the Translations, which were only intended, many years ago, to accompany and explain certain Engravings after ancient Gems, in the projected work of a friend, by whose kindness they are now recovered but as two of the original series (the "Adonis" of Bion, and "Song to the Rose" from Achilles Tatius) have subsequently appeared, it is presumed that the remainder may not improperly follow.

A single recent version is added

LONDON, February, 1862

## LITTLE MATTIE

## I

DEAD! Thirteen a month ago!  
Short and narrow her life's walk,  
Lover's love she could not know  
Even by a dream or talk  
Too young to be glad of youth,  
Missing honour, labour, rest,  
And the warmth of a babe's mouth  
At the blossom of her breast  
Must you pity her for this  
And for all the loss it is,  
You, her mother, with wet face,  
Having had all in your case?

## II

Just so young but yesternight,  
Now she is as old as death  
Meek, obedient in your sight,  
Gentle to a beck or breath  
Only on last Monday! Yours,  
Answering you like silver bells  
Lightly touched! An hour matures  
You can teach her nothing else

She has seen the mystery hid  
Under Egypt's pyramid  
By those eyelids pale and close  
Now she knows what Rhameses knows

## III

Cross her quiet hands, and smooth  
Down her patient locks of silk,  
Cold and passive as in truth  
You your fingers in spilt milk  
Drew along a marble floor,  
But her lips you cannot wring  
Into saying a word more,  
"Yes," or "No," or such a thing  
Though you call and beg and wreak  
Half your soul out in a shriek,  
She will be there in default  
And most innocent revolt

## IV

Ay, and if she spoke, maybe  
She would answer like the Son,  
"What is now 'twixt thee and me?"  
Dreadful answer! better none  
Yours on Monday God's to-day!  
Yours, your child, your blood,  
your heart,  
Called you called her, did you  
say,  
"Little Mattie" for your part?  
Now already it sounds strange,  
And you wonder in this change,  
What He calls His angel-creature,  
Higher up than you can reach her

## V

'Twas a green and easy world  
As she took it, room to play  
(Though one's hair might get uncured  
At the far end of the day)  
What she suffered she shook off  
In the sunshine, what she sinned  
She could pray on high enough  
To keep safe above the wind  
If reproved by God or you  
'Twas to better her she knew,  
And if crossed, she gathered still  
'Twas to cross out something ill

## VI

You, you had the right, you thought,  
 To survey her with sweet scorn,  
 Poor gay child, who had not caught  
 Yet the octave-stretch forlorn  
 Of your larger wisdom ! Nay,  
 Now your places are changed so,  
 In that same superior way  
 She regards you dull and low  
 As you did herself exempt  
 From life's sorrows Grand contempt  
 Of the spirits risen awhile  
 Who look back with such a smile !

## VII

There's the sting of't That, I think  
 Hurts the most a thousandfold !  
 To feel sudden, at a wink,  
 Some dear child we used to scold,  
 Praise, love both ways, kiss and tease,  
 Teach and tumble as our own,  
 All its curls about our knees,  
 Rise up suddenly full-grown  
 Who could wonder such a sight  
 Made a woman mad outright ?  
 Show me Michael with the sword  
 Rather than such angels, Lord !

## A FALSE STEP

## I

SWEET, thou hast trod on a heart  
 Pass ! there's a world full of men,  
 And women as fair as thou art  
 Must do such things now and then

## II

Thou only hast stepped unaware,—  
 Malice, not one can impute,  
 And why should a heart have been  
 there  
 In the way of a fair woman's foot ?

## III

It was not a stone that could trip,  
 Nor was it a thorn that could rend  
 Put up thy proud under lip !  
 'Twas merely the heart of a friend

## IV

And yet peradventure one day  
 Thou, sitting alone at the glass,  
 Remarking the bloom gone away,  
 Where the smile in its dimplement  
 was,

## V

And seeking around thee in vain  
 From hundreds who flattered be-  
 fore,

Such a word as " Oh, not in the main  
 Do I hold thee less precious, but  
 more ! "

## VI

Thou'lt sigh, very like, on thy part,  
 " Of all I have known or can know,  
 I wish I had only that Heart  
 I trod upon ages ago ! "

## VOID IN LAW

## I

SLEEP, little babe, on my knee,  
 Sleep, for the midnight is chill,  
 And the moon has died out in the  
 tree,  
 And the great human world goeth  
 ill  
 Sleep, for the wicked agree  
 Sleep, let them do as they will  
 Sleep

## II

Sleep, thou hast drawn from my  
 breast  
 The last drop of milk that was good,  
 And now, in a dream, suck the rest,  
 Lest the real should trouble thy  
 blood  
 Suck, little lips dispossessed,  
 As we kiss in the air whom we  
 would  
 Sleep

## III

O lips of thy father ! the same,  
 So like ! Very deeply they swore  
 When he gave me his ring and his  
 name,  
 To take back, I imagined, no more !  
 And now is all changed like a game,  
 Though the old cards are used as of  
 yore ?  
 Sleep

## IV

" Void in law," said the Courts  
 Something wrong  
 In the forms ? Yet, " Till death  
 part us two,  
 I, James, take thee, Jessie," was  
 strong,  
 And ONE witness competent. True  
 Such a marriage was worth an old  
 song,  
 Heard in Heaven though, as plain  
 as the New  
 Sleep



## V

Sleep little child, his and mine !  
 Her throat has the antelope curve,  
 And her cheek just the colour and line  
 Which fade not before him nor  
 swerve  
 Yet *she* has no child !—the divine  
 Seal of right upon loves that de-  
 serve  
 Sleep

## VI

My child ! though the world take her  
 part,  
 Saying, " She was the woman to  
 choose,  
 He had eyes, was a man in his  
 heart,"—  
 We twain the decision refuse  
 We weak as I am, as thou art  
 Cling on to him, never to loose  
 Sleep

## VII

He thinks that when done with this  
 place,  
 All's ended ? he'll new-stamp the  
 ore ?  
 Yes, Cæsar's—but not in our case  
 Let him learn we are waiting be-  
 fore  
 The grave's mouth, the heaven's gate,  
 God's face,  
 With implacable love evermore  
 Sleep

## VIII

He's ours, though he kissed her but  
 now,  
 He's ours, though she kissed in  
 reply,  
 He's ours, though himself disavow,  
 And God's universe favour the lie,  
 Ours to claim, ours to clasp, ours  
 below,  
 Ours above if we live, if we  
 die  
 Sleep

## IX

Ah baby, my baby, too rough  
 Is my lullaby ? What have I said ?  
 Sleep ! When I've wept long enough  
 I shall learn to weep softly instead,  
 And piece with some alien stuff  
 My heart to lie smooth for thy head  
 Sleep

## X

Two souls met upon thee my sweet,  
 Two loves led thee out to the sun  
 Alas pretty hands, pretty feet,  
 If the one who remains (only one)  
 Set her grief at thee, turned in a heat  
 To thine enemy,—were it well done?  
 Sleep

## XI

May He of the manger stand near  
 And love thee ! An infant He came  
 To His own who rejected Him here,  
 But the Magi brought gifts all the  
 same  
 I hurry the cross on my Dear !  
 My gifts are the griefs I declaim !  
 Sleep

## LORD WALTER'S WIFE

## I

" But why do you go ? " said the lady,  
 while both sate under the yew,  
 And her eyes were alive in their depth,  
 as the kraken beneath the sea-  
 blue

## II

" Because I fear you," he answered,—  
 " because you are far too fair,  
 And able to strangle my soul in a  
 mesh of your gold-coloured hair "

## III

" Oh that " she said, " is no reason !  
 Such knots are quickly undone,  
 And too much beauty, I reckon, is  
 nothing but too much sun "

## IV

" Yet farewell so," he answered,—  
 " the sunstroke's fatal at times  
 I value your husband, Lord Walter,  
 whose gallop rings still from the  
 limes "

## V

" Oh, that " she said, " is no reason  
 You smell a rose through a fence  
 If two should smell it, what matter ?  
 who grumbles, and where's the  
 pretence ? "

## VI

" But I," he replied, " have promised  
 another, when love was free,  
 To love her alone, alone, who alone  
 and afar loves me "

## VII

"Why, that," she said, "is no reason  
Love's always free, I am told  
Will you vow to be safe from the  
headache on Tuesday, and think  
it will hold?"

## VIII

"But you," he replied, "have a  
daughter, a young little child,  
who was laid  
In your lap to be pure, so I leave  
you the angels would make me  
afraid"

## IX

"Oh that," she said, "is no reason  
The angels keep out of the way,  
And Dora, the child, observes nothing,  
although you should please me  
and stay"

## X

At which he rose up in his anger,—  
"Why, now, you no longer are  
fair!  
Why now, you no longer are fatal,  
but ugly and hateful, I swear"

## XI

At which she laughed out in her scorn  
"These men! Oh, these men  
over nice,  
Who are shocked if a colour not  
virtuous is frankly put on by a  
vice"

## XII

Her eyes blazed upon him—"And  
you! You bring us your vices  
so near  
That we smell them! You think in  
our presence a thought 'twould  
defame us to hear!"

## XIII

"What reason had you, and what  
right,—I appeal to your soul  
from my life,—  
To find me too fair as a woman?  
Why, sir, I am pure, and a wife

## XIV

"Is the day-star too fair up above  
you? It burns you not Dare  
you imply  
I brushed you more close than the  
star does, when Walter had set  
me as high?"

B P

## XV

"If a man finds a woman too fair, he  
means simply adapted too much  
To us unlawful and fatal The  
praise!—shall I thank you for  
such?"

## XVI

"Too fair?—not unless you misuse  
us! and surely if, once in a while,  
You attain to it, straightway you  
call us no longer too fair, but  
too vile

## XVII

"A moment,—I pray your attention!  
—I have a poor word in my head  
I must utter, though womanly custom  
would set it down better unsaid.

## XVIII

"You grew, sir, pale to impertinence,  
once when I showed you a ring.  
You kissed my fan when I dropped it.  
No matter!—I've broken the  
thing

## XIX

"You did me the honour, perhaps,  
to be moved at my side now and  
then  
In the senses—a vice, I have heard,  
which is common to beasts and  
some men

## XX

"Love's a virtue for heroes!—as  
white as the snow on high hills,  
And immortal as every great soul is  
that struggles, endures, and fulfils.

## XXI

"I love my Walter profoundly—you,  
Maud, though you faltered a  
week,  
For the sake of what was it?  
an eyebrow? or less still, a mole  
on a cheek?"

## XXII

"And since when all's said, you're  
too noble to stoop to the irivo-  
lous cant  
About crimes irresistible virtues that  
swindle, betray and supplant

## XXIII

"I determined to prove to yourself  
that, whate'er you might dream  
or avow  
By illusion, you wanted precisely no  
more of me than you have now.

N N

## XXIV

"There! Look me full in the face!  
—in the face Understand, if  
you can,  
That the eyes of such women as I am  
are clean as the palm of a man

## XXV

"Drop his hand, you insult him  
Avoid us for fear we should cost  
you a scar—  
You take us for harlots, I tell you,  
and not for the women we are

## XXVI

"You wronged me but then I con-  
sidered there's Walter!  
And so at the end  
I vowed that he should not be mulcted,  
by me, in the hand of a friend

## XXVII

"Have I hurt you indeed? We are  
quits then Nay, friend of my  
Walter, be mine!  
Come, Dora, my darling my angel,  
and help me to ask him to dine "

# BIANCA AMONG THE NIGHTINGALES

## I

THE cypress stood up like a church  
That night we felt our love would  
hold,  
And saintly moonlight seemed to  
search  
And wash the whole world clean as  
gold,  
The olives crystallised the vales'  
Broad slopes until the hills grew  
strong  
The fireflies and the nightingales  
Throbbled each to either, flame  
and song  
The nightingales, the nightingales!

## II

Upon the angle of its shade  
The cypress stood, self-balanced  
high,  
Half up, half down as double-made,  
Along the ground, against the sky  
And *we*, too! from such soul-height  
went  
Such leaps of blood, so blindly  
driven,  
We scarce knew if our nature meant

Most passionate earth or intense  
heaven  
The nightingales, the nightingales!

## III

We paled with love, we shook with  
love,  
We kissed so close we could not vow,  
Till Giulio whispered "Sweet above  
God's Ever guarantees this Now"  
And through his words the nightin-  
gales  
Drove straight and full their long  
clear call,  
Like arrows through heroic mails,  
And love was awful in it all  
The nightingales, the nightingales!

## IV

O cold white moonlight of the north,  
Refresh these pulses, quench this  
hell!  
O coverture of death drawn forth  
Across this garden-chamber well!  
But what have nightingales to do  
In gloomy England, called the  
free  
(Yes free to die in! ) when we  
two  
Are Sundered, singing still to me?  
And still they sing, the nightingales!

## V

I think I hear him, how he cried  
"My own soul's life!" between  
their notes  
Each man has but one soul suppld,  
And that's immortal Though his  
throat's  
On fire with passion now, to *her*  
He can't say what to me he said!  
And yet he moves her, they aver  
The nightingales sing through my  
head,  
The nightingales, the nightingales!

## VI

He says to *her* what moves her most  
He would not name his soul within  
Her hearing,—rather pays her cost  
With praises to her lips and chin  
Man has but one soul, 'tis ordained,  
And each soul but one love I add,  
Yet souls are damned and love's pro-  
faned  
These nightingales will sing me  
mad!  
The nightingales, the nightingales!

VII

I marvel how the birds can sing  
There's little difference, in their  
view,  
Betwixt our Tuscan trees that spring  
As vital flames into the blue,  
And dull round blots of foliage meant,  
Like saturated sponges here  
To suck the fogs up As content  
Is *he* too in this land, 'tis clear  
And still they sing, the nightingales

VIII

My native Florence! dear, forgone!  
I see across the Alpine ridge  
How the last feast-day of Saint John  
Shot rockets from Carrara bridge  
The luminous city, tall with fire  
Trode deep down in that river of  
ours,

While many a boat with lamp and  
choir  
Skimmed birdlike over glittering  
towers  
I will not hear these nightingales

IX

I seem to float, *we* seem to float  
Down Arno's stream in festive  
guise,  
A boat strikes flame into our boat,  
And up that lady seems to rise  
As then she rose The shock had  
flashed

A vision on us! What a head,  
What leaping eyeballs!—beauty  
dashed

To splendour by a sudden dread  
And still they sing, the nightingales

X

Too bold to sin, too weak to die,  
Such women are so As for me,  
I would we had drowned there, he and  
I,

That moment, loving perfectly  
He had not caught her with her loosed  
Gold ringlets rarer in the  
south

Nor heard the "Grazie tanto" bruise  
To sweetness by her English mouth  
And still they sing, the nightingales

XI

She had not reached him at my heart  
With her fine tongue, as snakes  
indeed  
Kill flies, nor had I, for my part

Yearned after, in my desperate  
need,

And followed him as he did her  
To coasts left bitter by the tide,  
Whose very nightingales, elsewhere  
Delighting, torture and deride!  
For still they sing, the nightingales.

XII

A worthless woman, mere cold clay  
As all false things are! but so fair,  
She takes the breath of men away  
Who gaze upon her unaware  
I would not play her larcenous tricks  
To have her looks! She lied and  
stole,

And spat into my love's pure pyx  
The rank saliva of her soul  
And still they sing, the nightingales.

XIII

I would not for her white and pink,  
Though such he likes—her grace of  
limb,  
Though such he has praised—nor yet,  
I think,  
For life itself, though spent with  
him

Commit such sacrilege, affront  
God's nature which is love intrude  
'Twixt two affianced souls, and hunt  
Like spiders, in the altar's wood  
I cannot bear these nightingales.

XIV

If she chose sin, some gentler guise  
She might have sinned in, so it  
seems  
She might have pricked out both my  
eyes,

And I still seen him in my dreams!  
—Or drugged me in my soup or wine,  
Nor left me angry afterward  
To die here with his hand in mine,  
His breath upon me, were not hard  
(Our Lady hush these nightingales!)

XV

But set a spring for *him*, "mio ben"  
My only good, my first last love!—  
Though Christ knows well what sin is,  
when

He sees some things done they  
must move  
Himself to wonder Let her pass  
I think of her by night and day  
Must I too join her out, alas!  
With Giulio, in each word I say?  
And evermore the nightingales!

## XVI

Giulio, my Giulio!—sing they so,  
 And you be silent? Do I speak,  
 And you not hear? An arm you  
 throw  
 Round some one, and I feel so  
 weak?  
 --Oh owl-like birds! They sing for  
 spite  
 They sing for hate, they sing for  
 doom!  
 They'll sing through death who sing  
 through night  
 They'll sing and stun me in the  
 tomb—  
 The nightingales, the nightingales!

## MY KATE

## I

SHE was not as pretty as women I  
 know,  
 And yet all your best made of sun-  
 shine and snow  
 Drop to shade, melt to nought in the  
 long-trodden ways,  
 While she's still remembered on warm  
 and cold days—

My Kate

## II

Her air had a meaning her move-  
 ments a grace,  
 You turned from the fairest to gaze  
 on her face  
 And when you had once seen her  
 forehead and mouth,  
 You saw as distinctly her soul and  
 her truth—

My Kate

## III

Such a blue inner light from her eye-  
 lids outbroke,  
 You looked at her silence and fancied  
 she spoke  
 When she did, so peculiar yet soft  
 was the tone,  
 Though the loudest spoke also, you  
 heard her alone—

My Kate

## IV

I doubt if she said to you much that  
 could act  
 As a thought or suggestion she did  
 not attract  
 In the sense of the brilliant or wise I  
 infer

'Twas her thinking of others made  
 you think of her—

My Kate

## V

She never found fault with you, never  
 implied  
 Your wrong by her right, and yet  
 men at her side  
 Grew nobler, girls purer, as through  
 the whole town  
 The children were gladder that pulled  
 at her gown—

My Kate

## VI

None knelt at her feet confessed  
 lovers in thrall,  
 They knelt more to God than they  
 used,—that was all  
 If you praised her as charming, some  
 asked what you meant,  
 But the charm of her presence was  
 felt when she went—

My Kate

## VII

The weak and the gentle, the ribald  
 and rude,  
 She took as she found them, and did  
 them all good,  
 It always was so with her—see what  
 you have!  
 She has made the grass greener even  
 here with her grave—

My Kate

## VIII

My dear one!—when thou wast alive  
 with the rest,  
 I held thee the sweetest and loved  
 thee the best  
 And now thou art dead, shall I not  
 take thy part  
 As thy smiles used to do for thyself,  
 my sweet Heart—

My Kate?

A SONG FOR THE RAGGED  
SCHOOLS OF LONDON

WRITTEN IN ROME

## I

I AM listening here in Rome  
 "England's strong," say many  
 speakers,  
 "If she winks, the Czar must come,  
 Prow and topsail, to the breakers!"

## II

"England's rich in coal and oak,"  
 Adds a Roman, getting moody,  
 "If she shakes a travelling cloak,  
 Down our Appian roll the scudi!"

## III

"England's righteous," they rejoin,  
 "Who shall grudge her exaltations,  
 When her wealth of golden coin  
 Works the welfare of the nations?"

## IV

I am listening here in Rome  
 Over Alps a voice is sweeping—  
 "England's cruel! save us some  
 Of these victims in her keeping!"

## V

As the cry beneath the wheel  
 Of an old triumphal Roman  
 Cleft the people's shouts like steel,  
 While the show was spoilt for no  
 man,

## VI

Comes that voice Let others shout,  
 Other poets praise my land here  
 I am sadly sitting out,  
 Praying, "God forgive her grand-  
 eur"

## VII

Shall we boast of empire, where  
 Time with ruin sits commissioned?  
 In God's liberal blue air  
 Peter's dome itself looks wizened,

## VIII

And the mountains, in disdain,  
 Gather back their lights of opal  
 From the dumb, despondent plain,  
 Heaped with jawbones of a people

## IX

Lordly English, think it o'er,  
 Cæsar's doing is all undone!  
 You have cannons on your shore,  
 And free Parliaments in London,

## X

Princes' parks, and merchants' homes,  
 Tents for soldiers, ships for sea-  
 men,—  
 Ay, but ruins worse than Rome's  
 In your pauper men and women

## XI

Women leering through the gas  
 (Just such bosoms used to nurse  
 you),

Men, turned wolves by famine—pass!  
 Those can speak themselves, and  
 curse you

## XII

But these others—children small,  
 Spilt like blots about the city,  
 Quay, and street, and palace-wall—  
 Take them up into your pity!

## XIII

Ragged children with bare feet,  
 Whom the angels in white raiment  
 Know the names of, to repeat  
 When they come on you for pay-  
 ment

## XIV

Ragged children, hungry eyed,  
 Huddled up out of the coldness  
 On your doorsteps, side by side,  
 Till your footman damns their  
 boldness

## XV

In the alleys, in the squares,  
 Begging, lying little rebels,  
 In the noisy thoroughfares,  
 Struggling on with piteous trebles

## XVI

Patient children—think what pain  
 Makes a young child patient—  
 ponder!  
 Wronged too commonly to strain  
 After right, or wish, or wonder

## XVII

Wicked children, with peaked chins,  
 And old foreheads! there are many  
 With no pleasures except sins,  
 Gambolling with a stolen penny

## XVIII

Sickly children, that whine low  
 To themselves and not their  
 mothers,  
 From mere habit,—never so  
 Hoping help or care from others

## XIX

Healthy children, with those blue  
 English eyes, fresh from their  
 Maker,  
 Fierce and ravenous, staring through  
 At the brown loaves of the baker

## XX

I am listening here in Rome,  
 And the Romans are confessing,  
 "English children pass in bloom  
 All the prettiest made for blessing."

## XXI

"*Angli angeli*!" (resumed  
From the mediæval story)  
"Such rose angelhoods, emplumed  
In such ringlets of pure glory!"

## XXII

Can we smooth down the bright hair,  
O my sisters, calm, unthrilled in  
Our heart's pulses? Can we bear  
The sweet looks of our own children,

## XXIII

While those others, lean and small,  
Scurf and mildew of the city,  
Spot our streets, convict us all  
Till we take them into pity?

## XXIV

"Is it our fault?" you reply,  
"When, throughout civilisation,  
Every nation's empery  
Is asserted by starvation?"

## XXV

"All these mouths we cannot feed,  
And we cannot clothe these bodies"  
Well, if man's so hard indeed  
Let them learn at least what God  
is!

## XXVI

Little outcasts from life's fold,  
The grave's hope they may be  
joined in,  
By Christ's covenant consoled  
For our social contract's grinding

## XXVII

If no better can be done,  
Let us do but this,—endeavour  
That the sun behind the sun  
Shine upon them while they shiver!

## XXVIII

On the dismal London flags,  
Through the cruel social juggle,  
Put a thought beneath their rags  
To ennoble the heart's struggle

## XXIX

O my sisters, not so much  
Are we asked for—not a blossom  
From our children's nosegay, such  
As we gave it from our bosom,—

## XXX

Not the milk left in their cup,  
Not the lamp while they are sleep-  
ing,  
Not the little cloak hung up  
While the coat's in daily keeping,—

## XXXI

But a place in RAGGED SCHOOLS,  
Where the outcasts may to-morrow  
Learn by gentle words and rules  
Just the uses of their sorrow

## XXXII

O my sisters! children small,  
Blue-eyed, wailing through the  
city—  
Our own babes cry in them all  
Let us take them into pity

## MAY'S LOVE

## I

You love all, you say,  
Round, beneath, above me  
Find me then some way  
Better than to love me,  
Me, too, dearest May!

## II

O world-kissing eyes  
Which the blue heavens melt to!  
I, sad, otherwise,  
Loathe the sweet looks dealt to  
All things—men and flies

## III

You love all, you say  
Therefore, Dear, abate me  
Just your love, I pray!  
Shut your eyes and hate me—  
Only *me*—fair May!

## AMY'S CRUELTY

## I

FAIR Amy of the terraced house,  
Assist me to discover  
Why you who would not hurt a mouse  
Can torture so your lover

## II

You give your coffee to the cat,  
You stroke the dog for coming,  
And all your face grows kinder at  
The little brown bee's humming

## III

But when *he* haunts your door  
the town  
Marks coming and marks going  
You seem to have stitched your eye-  
lids down  
To that long piece of sewing!

## IV

You never give a look, not you,  
Nor drop him a "Good morning,"

To keep his long day warm and blue,  
So fretted by your scorning

## v

She shook her head—"The mouse  
and bee  
For crumb or flower will linger  
The dog is happy at my knee,  
The cat purrs at my finger

## vi

"But *he* to *him*, the least thing  
given  
Means great things at a distance,  
He wants my world, my sun, my  
heaven,  
Soul, body, whole existence

## vii

"They say love gives as well as  
takes,  
But I'm a simple maiden,—  
My mother's first smile when she  
wakes  
I still have smiled and prayed in

## viii

"I only know my mother's love  
Which gives all and asks nothing,  
And this new loving sets the groove  
Too much the way of loathing

## ix

"Unless he gives me all in change,  
I forfeit all things by him  
The risk is terrible and strange—  
I tremble, doubt deny him

## x

"He's sweetest friend, or hardest foe  
Best angel, or worst devil,  
I either hate or love him so,  
I can't be merely civil!

## xi

"You trust a woman who puts forth  
Her blossoms thick as summer's  
You think she dreams what love is  
worth,  
Who casts it to new-comers?

## xii

"Such love's a cowslip-ball to fling,  
A moment's pretty pastime,  
I give all me, if anything,  
The first time and the last time

## xiii

"Dear neighbour of the trellised  
house,  
A man should murmur never,

Though treated worse than dog and  
mouse,  
Till doted on for ever!"

## MY HEART AND I

## I

ENOUGH! we're tired, my heart and I.  
We sit beside the headstone thus,  
And wish that name were carved  
for us  
The moss reprints more tenderly  
The hard types of the mason's  
knife,  
As heaven's sweet life renews  
earth's life  
With which we're tired, my heart and  
I

## II

You see we're tired, my heart and I  
We dealt with books, we trusted  
men,  
And in our own blood drenched the  
pen,  
As if such colours could not fly  
We walked too straight for for-  
tune's end,  
We loved too true to keep a friend,  
At last we're tired, my heart and I

## III

How tired we feel, my heart and I!  
We seem of no use in the world,  
Our fancies hang grey and uncurled  
About men's eyes indifferently,  
Our voice which thrilled you so,  
will let  
You sleep, our tears are only wet  
What do we here, my heart and I?

## IV

So tired, so tired, my heart and I!  
It was not thus in that old time  
When Ralph sat with me 'neath  
the lime  
To watch the sunset from the sky  
"Dear love, you're looking tired,"  
he said,  
I, smiling at him, shook my head  
'Tis now we're tired, my heart and I

## v

So tired, so tired, my heart and I!  
Though now none takes me on his  
arm  
To fold me close and kiss me warm  
Till each quick breath end in a sigh



Of happy languor Now, alone,  
We lean upon this graveyard stone,  
Uncheered, unloved, my heart and I

## VI

Tired out we are, my heart and I  
Suppose the world brought diadems  
To tempt us, crusted with loose  
gems

Of powers and pleasures ? Let it try  
We scarcely care to look at even  
A pretty child, or God's blue  
heaven,

We feel so tired, my heart and I

## VII

Yet who complains ? My heart and  
I ?

In this abundant earth no doubt  
Is little room for things worn out  
Disdain them, break them, throw  
them by

And if before the days grew rough  
We *once* were loved, used,—well  
enough,

I think, we've fared, my heart and I

### THE BEST THING IN THE WORLD

What's the best thing in the world ?  
June rose, by May dew impearled,  
Sweet south wind, that means no  
rain,

Truth, not cruel to a friend,  
Pleasure, not in haste to end,  
Beauty, not self-decked and curled  
Till its pride is over plain,  
Light, that never makes you wink,  
Memory, that gives no pain,  
Love, when, so, you're loved again  
What's the best thing in the world ?  
—Something out of it, I think

### WHERE'S AGNES ?

## I

NAY, if I had come back so,  
And found her dead in her grave,  
And if a friend I know  
Had said, "Be strong, nor rave  
She lies there, dead below

## II

"I saw her, I who speak,  
White, stiff, the face one blank  
The blue shade came to her cheek  
Before they nailed the plank,  
For she had been dead a week"

## III

Why, if he had spoken so,  
I might have believed the thing,  
Although her look, although  
Her step, laugh, voice's ring  
Lived in me still as they do

## IV

But dead that other way,  
Corrupted thus and lost,  
That sort of worm in the clay ?  
I cannot count the cost,  
That I should rise and pay

## V

My Agnes false ? such shame ?  
She ? Rather be it said  
That the pure saint of her name  
Has stood there in her stead,  
And trucked you to this blame

## VI

Her very gown, her cloak  
Fell chastely no disguise,  
But expression ! while she broke  
With her clear grey morning-eyes  
Full upon me and then spoke

## VII

She wore her hair away  
From her forehead,—like a cloud  
Which a little wind in May  
Peels off finely disallowed  
Though bright enough to stay

## VIII

For the heavens must have the place  
To themselves, to use and shine in,  
As her soul would have her face  
To press through upon mine, in  
That orb of angel grace

## IX

Had she any fault at all,  
'Twas having none, I thought too—  
There seemed a sort of thrall,  
As she felt her shadow ought to  
Fall straight upon the wall

## X

Her sweetness strained the sense  
Of common life and duty,  
And every day's expense  
Of moving in such beauty  
Required, almost, defence

## XI

What good, I thought, is done  
By such sweet things, if any ?  
This world smells ill ! the sun

Though the garden-flowers are  
many,—  
*She is only one*

## XII

Can a voice so low and soft  
Take open actual part  
With Right,—maintain aloft  
Pure truth in life or art,  
Vexed always, wounded oft ?—

## XIII

*She fit, with that fair pose*  
Which melts from curve to curve,  
To stand, run, work with those  
Who wrestle and deserve,  
And speak plain without gloze ?

## XIV

But I turned round on my fear  
Defiant, disagreeing—  
What if God has set her here  
Less for action than for Being ?—  
For the eye and for the ear

## XV

Just to show what beauty may,  
Just to prove what music can,—  
And then to die away  
From the presence of a man,  
Who shall learn, henceforth, to pray ?

## XVI

As a door, left half ajar  
In heaven, would make him think  
How heavenly-different are  
Things glanced at through the  
chink,  
Till he pined from near to far

## XVII

That door could lead to hell ?  
That shining merely meant  
Damnation ? What ! *She fell*  
Like a woman, who was sent  
Like an angel, by a spell ?

## XVIII

*She, who scarcely trod the earth,*  
Turned mere dirt ? *My Agnes,—*  
*mine !*  
Called so ! felt of too much worth  
To be used so ! too divine  
To be breathed near, and so forth !

## XIX

Why, I dared not name a sin  
In her presence I went round,  
Clipped its name and shut it in  
Some mysterious crystal sound,—  
Changed the dagger for the pin

## XX

Now you name herself *that word* ?  
O my Agnes ! O my saint !  
Then the great joys of the Lord  
Do not last ? Then all this paint  
Runs off nature ? leaves a board ?

## XXI

Who's dead here ? No, not she  
Rather I ! or whence this damp  
Cold corruption's misery ?  
While my very mourners stamp  
Closer in the clods on me

## XXII

And my mouth is full of dust  
Till I cannot speak and curse—  
Speak and damn him "Blame's  
unjust "

Sin blots out the universe,  
All because she would and must ?

## XXIII

*She, my white rose dropping off*  
The high rose tree branch ! and not  
That the night wind blew too rough,  
Or the noon sun burnt too hot,  
But, that being a rose—'twas enough !

## XXIV

Then henceforth, may earth grow  
trees !  
No more roses !—hard straight  
lines  
To score lies out ! none of these  
Fluctuant curves, but firs and  
pines,  
Poplars, cedars, cypresses !

## DE PROFUNDIS

## I

THE face which, duly as the sun,  
Rose up for me with life begun,  
To mark all bright hours of the day  
With hourly love, is dimmed away,—  
And yet my days go on, go on

## II

The tongue which, like a stream,  
could run  
Smooth music from the roughest  
stone,  
And every morning with "Good day"  
Make each day good, is hushed away,—  
And yet my days go on, go on

## III

The heart which, like a staff, was one  
For mine to lean and rest upon,  
The strongest on the longest day

With steadfast love, is caught away,—  
And yet my days go on, go on

## IV

And cold before my summer's done,  
And deaf in Nature's general tune,  
And fallen too low for special fear,  
And here, with hope no longer here,—  
While the tears drop, my days go on

## V

The world goes whispering to its own,  
"This anguish pierces to the bone,"  
And tender friends go sighing round,  
"What love can ever cure this wound?"

My days go on, my days go on

## VI

The past rolls forward on the sun  
And makes all night O dreams be-  
gun,

Not to be ended! Ended bliss,  
And life that will not end in this!  
My days go on, my days go on

## VII

Breath freezes on my lips to moan  
As one alone, once not alone,  
I sit and knock at Nature's door,  
Heart-bare, heart-hungry, very poor,  
Whose desolated days go on

## VIII

I knock and cry,—Undone undone!  
Is there no help, no comfort,—none?  
No gleanings in the wide wheat-plains  
Where others drive their loaded  
wains?

My vacant days go on, go on

## IX

This Nature, though the snows be  
down,

Thinks kindly of the bird of June  
The little red hip on the tree  
Is ripe for such What is for me,  
Whose days so wintery go on?

## X

No bird am I, to sing in June,  
And dare not ask an equal boon  
Good nests and berries red are Na-  
ture's

To give away to better creatures,—  
And yet my days go on, go on

## XI

I ask less kindness to be done,—  
Only to loose these pilgrim-shoon,  
(Too early worn and grimed) with  
sweet

Cool deathly touch to these tired feet,  
Till days go out which now go on

## XII

Only to lift the turf unmown  
From off the earth where it has grown,  
Some cubit-space, and say "Behold,  
Creep in, poor Heart, beneath that  
fold,

Forgetting how the days go on"

## XIII

What harm would that do? Green  
anon

The sword would quicken, overshone  
By skies as blue, and crickets might  
Have leave to chirp there day and  
night

While my new rest went on, went on

## XIV

From gracious Nature have I won  
Such liberal bounty? may I run  
So, lizard-like within her side,  
And there be safe, who now am tried  
By days that painfully go on?

## XV

—A Voice reproves me thereupon  
More sweet than Nature's when the  
drone

Of bees is sweetest and more deep  
Than when the rivers overleap  
The shuddering pines, and thunder on

## XVI

God's Voice, not Nature's! Night  
and noon

He sits upon the great white throne  
And listens for the creatures' praise  
What babble we of days and days?  
The Day-spring He, whose days go  
on

## XVII

He reigns above, He reigns alone,  
Systems burn out and leave His  
throne

Fair mists of seraphs melt and fall  
Around Him, changeless amid all,—  
Ancient of Days, whose days go on

## XVIII

He reigns below, He reigns alone,  
And, having life in love forgone  
Beneath the crown of sovran thorns,  
He reigns the Jealous God Who  
mourns

Or rules with Him, while days go on?

## XIX

By anguish which made pale the sun,  
I hear Him charge His saints that  
none

Among His creatures anywhere  
Blasphe<sup>m</sup>e against Him with despair  
However darkly days go on

## XX

Take from my head the thorn-wreath  
brown !

No mortal grief deserves that crown  
O supreme Love, chief misery,  
The sharp regalia are for THEE  
Whose days eternally go on !

## XXI

For us,—whatever's undergone,  
Thou knowest, willest what is done  
Grief may be joy misunderstood,  
Only the Good discerns the good  
I trust Thee while my days go on

## XXII

Whatever's lost, it first was won  
We will not struggle nor impugn  
Perhaps the cup was broken here,  
That Heaven's new wine might show  
more clear

I praise Thee while my days go on

## XXIII

I praise Thee while my days go on,  
I love Thee while my days go on  
Through dark and dearth, through  
fire and frost,

With emptied arms and treasure lost,  
I thank Thee while my days go on

## XXIV

And having in Thy life-depth thrown  
Being and suffering (which are one),  
As a child drops his pebble small  
Down some deep well, and hears it fall  
Smiling—so I THY DAYS GO ON

## A MUSICAL INSTRUMENT

## I

WHAT was he doing, the great god  
Pan,

Down in the reeds by the river ?  
Spreading ruin and scattering ban,  
Splashing and paddling with hoofs of  
a goat,

And breaking the golden lilies afloat  
With the dragon-fly on the river

## II

He tore out a reed, the great god Pan,  
From the deep cool bed of the river

The lmpid water turbidly ran,  
And the broken lilies a-dying lay,  
And the dragon-fly had fled away,  
Ere he brought it out of the river.

## III

High on the shore sat the great god  
Pan

While turbidly flowed the river,  
And hacked and hewed as a great god  
can,

With his hard bleak steel at the  
patient reed,  
Till there was not a sign of the leaf  
indeed

To prove it fresh from the river.

## IV

He cut it short, did the great god Pan,  
(How tall it stood in the river !)  
Then drew the pith, like the heart of  
a man,

Steadily from the outside ring,  
And notched the poor dry empty  
thing

In holes, as he sat by the river

## V

" This is the way," laughed the great  
god Pan

(Laughed while he sat by the river),  
" The only way, since gods began  
To make sweet music, they could suc-  
ceed "

Then, dropping his mouth to a hole  
in the reed,

He blew in power by the river

## VI

Sweet, sweet, sweet, O Pan !

Piercing sweet by the river !  
Blinding sweet, O great god Pan !  
The sun on the hill forgot to die  
And the lilies revived, and the dragon-  
fly

Came back to dream on the river

## VII

Yet half a beast is the great god Pan,  
To laugh as he sits by the river,

Making a poet out of a man  
The true gods sigh for the cost and  
pain,—

For the reed which grows nevermore  
again

As a reed with the reeds in the  
river

FIRST NEWS FROM VILLA-  
FRANCA

## I

PEACE, peace, peace, do you say ?  
What !—with the enemy's guns in  
our ears ?  
With the country's wrong not ren-  
dered back ?  
What !—while Austria stands at bay  
In Mantua, and our Venice bears  
The cursed flag of the yellow and  
black ?

## II

Peace, peace, peace, do you say ?  
And thus the Mincio ? Where's the  
fleet,  
And where's the sea ? Are we all  
blind  
Or mad with the blood shed yesterday,  
Ignoring Italy under our feet,  
And seeing things before, behind ?

## III

Peace, peace, peace, do you say ?  
What !—uncontested, undenied ?  
Because we triumph, we succumb ?  
A pair of Emperors stand in the way  
(One of whom is a man, beside)  
To sign and seal our cannons dumb ?

## IV

No, not Napoleon !—he who mused  
At Paris, and at Milan spake,  
And at Solferino led the fight  
Not he we trusted, honoured, used  
Our hopes and hearts for till  
they break—  
Even so, you tell us in his  
sight

## V

Peace, peace, is still your word ?  
We say you lie then !—that is plain  
There is no peace, and shall be  
none  
Our very Dead would cry " Absurd ! "  
And clamour that they died in vain,  
And whine to come back to the sun

## VI

Hush ! more reverence for the Dead !  
They've done the most for Italy  
Evermore since the earth was fair  
Now would that we had died instead,  
Still dreaming peace meant liberty,  
And did not, could not mean  
depair

## VII

Peace, you say ?—yes, peace, in  
truth !  
But such a peace as the ear can  
achieve  
'Twixt the rifle's click and the rush  
of the ball,  
'Twixt the tiger's spring and the  
crunch of the tooth,  
'Twixt the dying atheist's negative  
And God's Face—waiting, af ter all

KING VICTOR EMANUEL  
ENTERING FLORENCE, APRIL,  
1860

## I

KING of us all, we cried to thee, cried  
to thee,  
Trampled to earth by the beasts  
impure,  
Dragged by the chariots which  
shame as they roll  
The dust of our torment far and wide  
to thee  
Went up, dark'ning thy royal soul  
Be witness, Cavour,  
That the King was sad for the people  
in thrall,  
This King of us all !

## II

King, we cried to thee ! Strong in  
replying,  
Thy word and thy sword sprang  
rapid and sure,  
Cleaving our way to a nation's  
place  
Oh first soldier of Italy !—crying  
Now grateful, exultant, we look in  
thy face  
Be witness, Cavour,  
That, freedom's first soldier, the  
freed should call  
First King of them all !

## III

This is our beautiful Italy's birthday,  
High-thoughted souls, whether  
many or fewer,  
Bring her the gift, and wish her  
the good,  
While Heaven presents on this sunny  
earth-day  
The noble King to the land re-  
newed  
Be witness, Cavour !

Roar, cannon-mouths ! Proclaim, in-  
 stall  
 The King of us all !

## IV

Grave he rides through the Florence  
 gateway  
 Clenching his face into calm, to im-  
 mure  
 His struggling heart till it half dis-  
 appears,  
 If he relaxed for a moment, straight-  
 way  
 He would break out into passionate  
 tears—  
 (Be witness, Cavour !)  
 While rings the cry without interval,  
 " Live, King of us all ! "

## V

Cry, free peoples ! Honour the na-  
 tion  
 By crowning the true man—and  
 none is truer  
 Pisa is here, and Livorno is here,  
 And thousands of faces, in wild  
 exultation,  
 Burn over the windows to feel him  
 near—  
 (Be witness, Cavour !)  
 Burn over from terrace, roof, window  
 and wall,  
 On this King of us all

## VI

Grave ! A good man's ever the  
 graver  
 For bearing a nation's trust secure,  
 And *he*, he thinks of the Heart, be-  
 side,  
 Which broke for Italy, failing to save  
 her,  
 And pining away by Oporto's tide  
 Be witness, Cavour  
 That he thinks of his vow on that  
 royal pall  
 This King of us all

## J

## VII

Flowers, flowers, from the flowery  
 city !  
 Such innocent thanks for a deed so  
 pure,  
 As, melting away for joy into  
 flowers,  
 The nation invites him to enter his  
 Pitti

And evermore reign in this Florence  
 of ours

Be witness Cavour !

He'll stand where the reptiles were  
 used to crawl,  
 This King of us all

## VIII

Grave, as the manner of noble men is—  
 Deeds unfinished will weigh on the  
 doer  
 And, baring his head to those  
 crape-veiled flags,  
 He bows to the grief of the South and  
 Venice  
 Oh, riddle the last of the yellow to  
 rags,  
 And swear by Cavour  
 That the King shall reign where the  
 tyrants fall,  
 True King of us all !

THE SWORD OF CASTRUCCIO  
 CASTRACANI

' Questa e per me '—KING VICTOR EMANUEL

## I

WHEN Victor Emanuel the King  
 Went down to his Lucca that day,  
 The people, each vaunting the thing  
 As he gave it, gave all things away,—  
 In a burst of fierce gratitude, say,  
 As they tore out their hearts for the  
 King

## II

—Gave the green forest-walk on the  
 wall,  
 With the Apennine blue through  
 the trees,  
 Gave the palaces, churches, and all  
 The great pictures which burn out  
 of these  
 But the eyes of the King seemed to  
 freeze  
 As he gazed upon ceiling and wall

## III

" Good," said the King as he passed  
 Was he cold to the arts ?—or else  
 coy  
 To possession ? or crossed, at the last  
 (Whispered some), by the vote in  
 Savoy ?  
 Shout ! Love him enough for his  
 joy !  
 " Good," said the King as he passed

## IV

He, travelling the whole day through  
flowers  
And protesting amenities, found  
At Pistoia, betwixt the two showers  
Of red roses, the "Orphans" (re-  
nowned  
As the heirs of Puccini) who  
wound  
With a sword through the crowd and  
the flowers

## V

" 'Tis the sword of Castruccio O  
King,—  
In that strife of intestinal hate  
Very famous! Accept what we  
bring,  
We who cannot be sons, by our fate,  
Rendered citizens by thee of late,  
And endowed with a country and  
king

## VI

" Read! Puccini has willed that this  
sword  
(Which once made in an ignorant  
feud  
Many orphans) remain in our ward  
Till some patriot its pure civic  
blood  
Wipe away in the foe's and make  
good,  
In delivering the land by the sword "

## VII

Then the King exclaimed " This is  
for me! "  
And he dashed out his hand on the  
hilt,  
While his blue eye shot fire openly,  
And his heart overboiled till it spilt  
A hot prayer—" God! the rest as  
Thou wilt!  
But grant me this!—*This is for me* "

## VIII

O Victor Emanuel, the King,  
The sword be for *thee*, and the deed,  
And nought for the alien, next spring  
Nought for Hapsburg and Bourbon  
agreed—  
But, for us, a great Italy freed,  
With a hero to head us,—our King!

## SUMMING UP IN ITALY

(INSCRIBED TO INTELLIGENT PUBLICS  
OUT OF IT)

## I

OBSERVE how it will be at last,  
When our Italy stands at full  
stature,  
A year ago tied down so fast  
That the cord cut the quick of her  
nature!  
You'll honour the deed and its scope,  
Then, in logical sequence upon it,  
Will use up the remnants of rope  
By hanging the men who have done  
it

## II

The speech in the Commons which  
hits you  
A sketch off, how dungeons must  
feel,—  
The official despatch, which commits  
you  
From stamping out groans with  
your heel,—  
Suggestions in journal or book for  
Good efforts,—are praised as it  
meet  
But what in this world can men look  
for,  
Who only achieve and complete?

## III

True, you've praise for the fireman  
who sets his  
Brave face to the axe of the flame  
Disappears in the smoke, and then  
fetches  
A babe down, or idiot that's lame,—  
For the boor even, who rescues  
through pity  
A sheep from the brute who would  
kick it  
But saviours of nations!—'tis pretty,  
And doubtful they *may* be so  
wicked

## IV

Azeglio, Farini, Mamiani,  
Ricasoli,—doubt by the dozen!—  
here's  
Pepoli too, and Cipriani,  
Imperial cousins and cozeners—  
Arese, Laiatico,—courtly  
Of manners, if stringent of mouth  
Garibaldi! we'll come to him shortly  
(As soon as he *ends* in the South)

V

Napoleon—as strong as ten armies,  
Corrupt as seven devils—a fact  
You accede to, then seek where the  
harm is  
Drained off from the man to his act,  
And find—a free nation ! Suppose  
Some hell-brood in Eden's sweet  
greenery,  
Convoked for creating—a rose !  
Would it suit the infernal machi-  
nery ?

VI

Cavour—to the despot's desire,  
Who his own thought so craftily  
marries—  
What is he but just a thin wire  
For conducting the lightning from  
Paris ?  
Yes, write down the two as compeers,  
Confessing (you would not permit a  
lie)  
He bore up his Piedmont ten years  
Till she suddenly smiled and was  
Italy

VII

And the King with that " stain on his  
scutcheon " <sup>1</sup>  
Savoy—as the calumny runs,  
(If it be not his blood,—with his  
clutch on  
The sword, and his face to the  
guns)  
O first, where the battle-storm  
gathers,  
O loyal of heart on the throne,  
Let those keep the " graves of their  
fathers,"  
Who quail, in a nerve, from their  
own !

VIII

For *thee*—through the dim Hades-  
portal  
The dream of a voice—" Blessed  
thou  
Who hast made all thy race twice  
immortal !  
No need of the sepulchres now !  
—Left to Bourbons and Hapsburgs,  
who fester  
Above-ground with worm-eaten  
souls  
While the ghost of some pale feudal  
jester

Before them strews treaties in  
holes "

IX

But hush !—am I dreaming a poem  
Of Hades, Heaven, Justice ? Not  
I—  
I began too far off in my proem,  
With what men believe and deny  
And on earth, whatsoever the need is  
(To sum up as thoughtful re-  
viewers),  
The moral of every great deed is—  
The virtue of slandering the doers

" DIED "

(*" The Times "* Obituary)

I

WHAT shall we add now ? He is  
dead  
And I who praise and you who  
blame,  
With wash of words across his  
name  
Find suddenly declared instead—  
" On Sunday, third of August dead "

II

Which stops the whole we talked to-  
day  
I quickened to a plausible glance  
At his large general tolerance  
By common people's narrow way,  
Stopped short in praising Dead,  
they say

III

And you who had just put in a sort  
Of cold deduction—" rather large  
Through weakness of the continent  
marge  
Than greatness of the thing con-  
tained"—  
Broke off Dead !—there, you stood  
restrained

IV

As if we had talked in following one  
Up some long gallery " Would  
you choose  
An air like that ? The gait is  
loose—  
Or noble " Sudden in the sun  
An oubliette winks Where is he ?  
Gone

<sup>1</sup> Blue Book Diplomatical Correspondence



v

Dead Man's "I was" by God's  
"I am"—

All hero-worship comes to that  
High heart, high thought, high  
fame, as flat

As a gravestone Bring your *Jacet*  
*iam*—

The epitaph's an epigram

vi

Dead There's an answer to arrest  
All carping Dust's his natural  
place?

He'll let the flies buzz round his  
face

And, though you slander, not protest?  
—From such an one, exact the Best?

vii

Opinions gold or brass are null  
We chuck our flattery or abuse,  
Called Cæsar's due, as Charon's  
dues,

I' the teeth of some dead sage or fool,  
To mend the grinning of a skull

viii

Be abstinent in praise and blame  
The man's still mortal, who stands  
first,

And mortal only, if last and worst  
Then slowly lift so frail a fame,  
Or softly drop so poor a shame

### THE FORCED RECRUIT

(SOLFÉRINO, 1859)

i

In the ranks of the Austrian you  
found him,

He died with his face to you all  
Yet bury him here where around him  
You honour your bravest that fall

ii

Venetian, fair-featured and slender,  
He lies shot to death in his youth,  
With a smile on his lips over-tender  
For any mere soldier's dead mouth

iii

No stranger, and yet not a traitor,  
Though alien the cloth on his breast,  
Underneath it how seldom a greater  
Young heart has a shot sent to rest!

iv

By your enemy tortured and goaded

To march with them, stand in their  
file,  
His musket (see) never was loaded,  
He facing your guns with that  
smile!

v

As orphans yearn on to their mothers  
He yearned to your patriot bands,—  
"Let me die for our Italy, brothers,  
If not in your ranks, by your  
hands!"

vi

"Aim straightly, fire steadily! spare  
me  
A ball in the body which may  
Deliver my heart here and tear me  
This badge of the Austrian away!"

vii

So thought he, so died he this morn-  
ing  
What then? many others have  
died  
Ay, but easy for men to die scorning  
The death-stroke, who fought side  
by side—

viii

One tricolor floating above them,  
Struck down 'mid triumphant ac-  
claims  
Of an Italy rescued to love them  
And blazon the brass with their  
names

ix

But he,—without witness or honour,  
Mixed, shamed in his country's  
regard,  
With the tyrants who march in upon  
her  
Died faithful and passive 'twas  
hard

x

'Twas sublime In a cruel restriction  
Cut off from the guerdon of sons,  
With most filial obedience, conviction,  
His soul kissed the lips of her guns

xi

That moves you? Nay, grudge not  
to show it,  
While digging a grave for him  
here  
The others who died, says your poet,  
Have glory,—~~let~~ *him* have a tear

## GARIBALDI

## I

He bent his head upon his breast  
Wherein his lion-heart lay sick —  
“ Perhaps we are not ill-repaid ,  
Perhaps this is not a true test ,  
Perhaps this was not a foul trick ,  
Perhaps none wronged, and none  
betrayed

## II

“ Perhaps the people's vote which  
here  
United, there may disunite,  
And both be lawful as they think ,  
Perhaps a patriot, statesman, dear  
For chartering nations, can with  
right  
Disfranchise those who hold the  
ink

## III

“ Perhaps men's wisdom is not craft ,  
Men's greatness not a selfish greed ,  
Men s justice, not the safer side  
Perhaps even women, when they  
laughed,  
Wept thanked us that the land  
was freed,  
Not wholly (though they kissed us)  
led

## IV

“ Perhaps no more than this we  
meant,  
When up at Austria's guns we flew,  
And quenched them with a cry  
apiece,  
*Italia* !—Yet a dream was sent  
The little house my father knew  
The olives and the palms of Nice ”

## V

He paused, and drew his sword out  
slow,  
Then pored upon the blade intent,  
As if to read some written thing,  
While many murmured,—“ He will  
go  
In that despairing sentiment  
And break his sword before the  
King ”

## VI

He poring still upon the blade  
His large lid quivered, something  
fell  
“ Perhaps,” he said, “ I was not  
born

B P

With such fine brains to treat and  
trade,—

And if a woman knew it well  
Her falsehood only meant her scorn.

## VII

“ Yet through Varese's cannon-  
smoke  
My eye saw clear men feared this  
man  
At Como, where this sword could  
seal  
Death's protocol with every stroke .  
And now the drop there  
scarcely can  
Impair the keenness of the steel

## VIII

“ So man and sword may have their  
use ,  
And if the soil beneath my foot  
In valour's act is forfeited,  
I'll strike the harder take my dues  
Out nobler and all loss confute  
From ampler heavens above my  
head

## IX

“ My King, King Victor I am thine !  
So much Nice-dust as what I am  
(To make our Italy) must cleave.  
Forgive that ” Forward with a sign  
He went

You've seen the telegram ?  
*Palermo's taken, we believe*

## ONLY A CURL

## I

FRIENDS of faces unknown and a land  
Unvisited over the sea,  
Who tell me how lonely you stand  
With a single gold curl in the hand  
Held up to be looked at by me,—

## II

While you ask me to ponder and say  
What a father and mother can do,  
With the bright fellow-locks put  
away  
Out of reach, beyond kiss in the clay  
Where the violets press nearer  
than you

## III

Shall I speak like a poet, or run  
Into weak woman's tears for relief ?  
Oh, children !—I never lost one,—

O O

Yet my arm's round my own little  
son,  
And Love knows the secret of  
Grief

## IV

And I feel what it must be and is,  
When God draws a new angel so  
Through the house of a man up to  
His,  
With a murmur of music, you miss,  
And a rapture of light, you forgo

## V

How you think, staring on at the  
door,  
Where the face of your angel  
flashed in,  
That its brightness familiar before,  
Burns off from you ever the more  
For the dark of your sorrow and  
sin

## VI

"God lent him and takes him," you  
sigh,  
—Nay, there let me break with  
your pain  
God's generous in giving, say I,—  
And the thing which He gives, I deny  
That He ever can take back again

## VII

He gives what He gives I appeal  
To all who bear babes—in the hour  
When the veil of the body we feel  
Rent round us,—while torments re-  
veal  
The motherhood's advent in power,

## VIII

And the babe cries!—has each of us  
known  
By apocalypse (God being there  
Full in nature) the child is our own,  
Life of life love of love, moan of moan,  
Through all changes, all times,  
everywhere

## IX

He's ours and for ever Believe,  
O father!—O mother, look back  
To the first love's assurance! To  
give  
Means with God not to tempt or  
deceive  
With a cup thrust in Benjamin's  
sack

## X

He gives what He gives Be con-  
tent!  
He resumes nothing given,—be  
sure!  
God lend? Where the usurers lent  
In His temple, indignant He went  
And scourged away all those  
impure

## XI

He lends not, but gives to the end,  
As He loves to the end If it seem  
That He draws back a gift, compre-  
hend  
Tis to add to it rather—amend,  
And finish it up to your dream,—

## XII

Or keep,—as a mother will toys  
Too costly, though given by herself,  
Till the room shall be stiller from  
noise,  
And the children more fit for such  
joys,  
Kept over their heads on the shelf

## XIII

So look up, friends! you, who indeed  
Have possessed in your house a  
sweet piece  
Of the Heaven which men strive for,  
must need  
Be more earnest than others are,—  
speed  
Where they loiter, persist where  
they cease

## XIV

You know how one angel smiles there  
Then weep not 'Tis easy for you  
To be drawn by a single gold hair  
Of that curl, from earth's storm and  
despair  
To the safe place above us Adieu

# A VIEW ACROSS THE ROMAN CAMPAGNA

(1861)

## I

Over the dumb Campagna-sea,  
Out in the offing through mist and  
rain,  
Saint Peter's Church heaves silently  
Like a mighty ship in pain,  
Facing the tempest with struggle  
and strain

## II

Motionless waifs of ruined towers,  
 Soundless breakers of desolate land  
 The sullen surf of the mist devours  
 That mountain-range upon either  
 hand,  
 Eaten away from its outline grand

## III

And over the dumb Campagna-sea  
 Where the ship of the Church  
 heaves on to wreck  
 Alone and silent as God must be,  
 The Christ walks Ay, but Peter's  
 neck  
 Is stiff to turn on the foundering  
 deck

## IV

Peter, Peter ! if such be thy name,  
 Now leave the ship for another to  
 steer,  
 And proving thy faith evermore the  
 same,  
 Come forth, tread out through the  
 dark and drear,  
 Since He who walks on these seas is here

## V

Peter, Peter ! He does not speak,  
 He is not as rash as in old Galilee  
 Safer a ship, though it toss and leak,  
 Than a reeling foot on a rolling sea !  
 And he's got to be round in the  
 girth, thinks he

## VI

Peter, Peter ! He does not stir,  
 His nets are heavy with silver fish,  
 He reckons his gains, and is keen to  
 infer  
 —“The broil on the shore, if the  
 Lord should wish,  
 But the sturgeon goes to the Cæsar's  
 dish”

## VII

Peter, Peter ! thou fisher of men,  
 Fisher of fish wouldst thou live in-  
 stead ?  
 Hagglng for pence with the other  
 Ten,  
 Cheating the market at so much a  
 head,  
 Gripping the Bag of the traitor  
 Dead ?

## VIII

At the triple crow of the Gallic cock

Thou weep'st not, thou, though  
 thine eyes be dazed  
 What bird comes next in the tempest  
 shock ?  
 —Vultures ! see,—as when Romu-  
 lus gazed,—  
 To inaugurate Rome for a world  
 amazed !

## THE KING'S GIFT

## I

TERESA, ah, Teresita !  
 Now what has the messenger brought  
 her,  
 Our Garibaldi's young daughter,  
 To make her stop short in her  
 singing ?  
 Will she not once more repeat a  
 Verse from that hymn of our hero's,  
 Setting the souls of us ringing ?  
 Break off the song where the tear  
 rose ?  
 Ah, Teresita !

## II

A young thing mark, is Teresa :  
 Her eyes have caught fire, to be sure,  
 in  
 That necklace of jewels from Turin,  
 Till blind their regard to us men is.  
 But still she remembers to raise a  
 Sly look to her father, and note—  
 “Could she sing on as well about  
 Venice,  
 Yet wear such a flame at her throat ?  
 Decide for Teresa”

## III

Teresa, ah, Teresita !  
 His right hand has paused on her  
 head—  
 “Accept it, my daughter” he said ;  
 “Ay, wear it, true child of thy  
 mother !  
 Then sing, till all start to their feet a  
 New verse ever bolder and freer !  
 King Victor's no king like another,  
 But verily noble as *we* are,  
 Child, Teresita !”

## PARTING LOVERS

(SIENA, 1860)

## I

I LOVE thee love thee, Giulio,  
 Some call me cold, and some de-  
 mure,

And if thou hast ever guessed that so  
I loved thee well, the proof  
was poor  
And no one could be sure

## II

Before thy song (with shifted rhymes  
To suit my name) did I undo  
The persian ? If it stirred sometimes,  
Thou hast not seen a hand push  
through  
A foolish flower or two

## III

My mother listening to my sleep  
Heard nothing but a sigh at night,—  
The short sigh rippling on the deep,  
When hearts run out of breath and  
sight  
Of men, to God's clear light

## IV

When others named thee,—thought  
thy brows  
Were straight, thy smile was tender,—“ Here  
He comes between the vineyard-  
rows ! ”  
I said not “ Ay ” nor waited, Dear,  
To feel thee step too near

## V

I left such things to bolder girls,—  
Olivia or Clotilda Nay,  
When that Clotilda, through her  
curls,  
Held both thine eyes in hers one  
day,  
I marvelled, let me say

## VI

I could not try the woman's trick  
Between us straightway fell the  
blush  
Which kept me separate, blind and  
sick  
A wind came with thee in a flush,  
As blown through Sinai's bush

## VII

But now that Italy invokes  
Her young men to go forth and  
chase  
The foe or perish,—nothing chokes  
My voice, or drives me from the  
place  
I look thee in the face

## VIII

I love thee ! It is understood,  
Confest I do not shrink or start

No blushes ! all my body's blood  
Has gone to greatness this poor heart  
That, loving, we may part

## IX

Our Italy invokes the youth  
To die if need be Still there's  
room,  
Though earth is strained with dead in  
truth  
Since twice the lilies were in bloom  
They have not grudged a tomb

## X

And many a plighted maid and wife  
And mother, who can say since then  
“ My country,”—cannot say through  
life  
“ My son ” “ my spouse ” “ my  
flower of men ”  
And not weep dumb again

## XI

Heroic males the country bears,—  
But daughters give up more than  
sons  
Flags wave, drums beat and una-  
wares  
You flash your souls out with the  
guns,  
And take your Heaven at once

## XII

But we !—we empty heart and home  
Of life's life, love ! We bear to  
think  
You're gone,—to feel you may not  
come —  
To hear the door-latch stir and  
clink  
Yet no more you ! nor sink

## XIII

Dear God ! when Italy is one,  
Complete, content from bound to  
bound,  
Suppose, for my share, earth's undone  
By one grave in't !—as one small  
wound  
Will kill a man, 'tis found

## XIV

What then ? If love's delight must  
end,  
At least we'll clear its truth from  
flaws  
I love thee love thee, sweetest friend !  
Now take my sweetest without  
pause,  
And help the nation's cause,

## xv

And thus, of noble Italy  
 We'll both be worthy! Let her  
 show  
 The future how we made her free  
 Not sparing life nor Giulio,  
 Nor this this heartbreak!  
 Go

## MOTHER AND POET

(TURIN, AFTER NEWS FROM GAETA  
 1861)

## I

DEAD! One of them shot by the sea  
 in the east,  
 And one of them shot in the west  
 by the sea  
 Dead! both my boys! When you  
 sit at the feast  
 And are wanting a great song for  
 Italy free,  
 Let none look at me!

## II

Yet I was a poetess only last year,  
 And good at my art, for a woman,  
 men said,  
 But *this* woman, *this*, who is agonised  
 here,  
 —The east sea and west sea rhyme  
 on in her head  
 For ever instead

## III

What art can a woman be good at?  
 Oh, vain!  
 What art is she good at, but hurt-  
 ing her breast  
 With the milk-teeth of babes, and a  
 smile at the pain?  
 Ah boys how you hurt! you were  
 strong as you pressed,  
 And I proud, by that test

## IV

What art's for a woman? To hold  
 on her knees  
 Both darlings! to feel all their arms  
 round her throat  
 Cling, strangle a little! to sew by  
 degrees  
 And 'broider the long-clothes and  
 neat little coat,  
 To dream and to doat

## v

To teach them It stings there!  
 I made them indeed  
 Speak plain the word *country* I  
 taught them, no doubt,  
 That a country's a thing men should  
 die for at need  
 I prated of liberty, rights and about  
 The tyrant cast out

## VI

And when their eyes flashed O  
 my beautiful eyes!  
 I exulted, nay, let them go forth at  
 the wheels  
 Of the guns, and denied not But  
 then the surprise  
 When one sits quite alone! Then  
 one weeps, then one kneels!  
 God, how the house feels!

## VII

At first, happy news came, in gay  
 letters moiled  
 With my kisses,—of camp-life and  
 glory, and how  
 They both loved me, and, soon com-  
 ing home to be spoiled,  
 In return would fan off every fly  
 from my brow  
 With their green laurel-bough

## VIII

Then was triumph at Turin "An-  
 cona was free!"  
 And someone came out of the cheers  
 in the street,  
 With a face pale as stone, to say  
 something to me  
 My Guido was dead! I fell down  
 at his feet,  
 While they cheered in the  
 street

## IX

I bore it, friends soothed me, my  
 grief looked sublime  
 As the ransom of Italy One boy  
 remained  
 To be leant on and walked with, re-  
 calling the time  
 When the first grew immortal,  
 while both of us strained  
 To the height he had gained

## x

And letters still came, shorter, sad-  
 der, more strong,  
 Writ now but in one hand, "I was  
 not to faint,—

One loved me for two—would be with  
me ere long  
And *Viva l'Italia!*—he died for,  
our saint,  
Who forbids our complaint "

## XI

My Nanni would add, "he was safe,  
and aware  
Of a presence that turned off the  
balls,—was impest  
It was Guido himself, who knew what  
I could bear,  
And how 'twas impossible, quite  
dispossessed,  
To live on for the rest "

## XII

On which, without pause, up the tele-  
graph-line  
Swept smoothly the next news  
from Gaeta —*Shot*  
*Tell his mother* Ah, ah, "his,"  
"their" mother,—not "mine"  
No voice says "My mother" again  
to me What!

You think Guido forgot ?

## XIII

Are souls straight so happy that,  
dizzy with Heaven,  
They drop earth's affections, con-  
ceive not of woe ?

I think not Themselves were too  
lately forgiven

Through THAT Love and Sorrow  
which reconciled so  
The Above and Below

## XIV

O Christ of the five wounds, Who  
look'dst through the dark  
To the face of Thy mother ! con-  
sider, I pray,

How we common mothers stand deso-  
late, mark,

Whose sons, not being Christs, die  
with eyes turned away,  
And no last word to say !

## XV

Both boys dead ? but that's out of  
nature We all

Have been patriots, yet each house  
must always keep one

'Twere imbecile, hewing out roads  
to a wall,

And, when Italy's made, for what  
end is it done

If we have not a son ?

## XVI

Ah, ah, ah ! when Gaeta's taken, what  
then ?

When the fair wicked queen sits  
no more at her sport

Of the fire-balls of death crashing  
souls out of men ?

When the guns of Cavalli with final  
retort

Have cut the game short ?

## XVII

When Venice and Rome keep their  
new jubilee,

When your flag takes all heaven for  
its white, green and red,

When you have your country from  
mountain to sea

When King Victor has Italy's  
crown on his head,

(And I have my Dead)—

## XVIII

What then ? Do not mock me Ah,  
ring your bells low,

And burn your lights faintly ! My  
country is *there*,

Above the star pricked by the last  
peak of snow

My Italy's *THERE*, with my brave  
civic Pair,

To disfranchise despair !

## XIX

Forgive me Some women bear  
children in strength,

And bite back the cry of their pain  
in self-scorn,

But the birth-pangs of nations will  
wring us at length

Into wail such as this—and we sit  
on forlorn

When the man-child is born

## XX

Dead ! One of them shot by the sea  
in the east,

And one of them shot in the west  
by the sea

Both ! both my boys ! If in keeping  
the feast

You want a great song for your  
Italy free,

Let none look at *me* !

[This was Laura Savio, of Turin, a poetess  
and patriot, whose sons were killed at Ancona  
and Gaeta]

## NATURE'S REMORSES

(ROME 1861)

## I

HER soul was bred by a throne, and fed  
 From the sucking-bottle used in  
 her race  
 On starch and water (for mother's  
 milk  
 Which gives a larger growth instead)  
 And, out of the natural liberal  
 grace,  
 Was swaddled away in violet silk

## II

And young and kind, and royally  
 blind,  
 Forth she stepped from her palace-  
 door  
 On three-piled carpet of compli-  
 ments,  
 Curtains of incense drawn by the  
 wind  
 In between her for evermore  
 And daylight issues of events

## III

On she drew, as a queen might do,  
 To meet a Dream of Italy,—  
 Of magical town and musical  
 wave,  
 Where even a god, his amulet blue  
 Of shining sea, in an ecstasy  
 Dropt and forgot in a Nereid's  
 cave

## IV

Down she goes, as the soft wind blows,  
 To live more smoothly than mor-  
 tals can,  
 To love and to reign as queen  
 and wife,  
 To wear a crown that smells of a rose,  
 And still, with a sceptre as light as  
 a fan,  
 Beat sweet time to the song of life

## V

What is this ? As quick as a kiss  
 Falls the smile from her girlish  
 mouth !  
 The lion-people has left its lair,  
 Roaring along her garden of bliss,  
 And the fiery underworld of the  
 South  
 Scorched a way to the upper air

## VI

And a fire-stone ran in the form of a  
 man,

Burningly, boundingly, fatal and  
 fell,  
 Bowling the kingdom down !  
 Where was the King ?  
 She had heard somewhat, since life  
 began,  
 Of terrors on earth and horrors in  
 hell,  
 But never, never of such a thing

## VII

You think she dropped when her  
 dream was stopped,  
 When the blotch of Bourbon blood  
 inlay,  
 Lividly rank, her new lord's  
 cheek ?  
 Not so Her high heart overtopped  
 The royal part she had come to play  
 Only the men in that hour were  
 weak

## VIII

And twice a wife by her ravaged life,  
 And twice a queen by her kingdom  
 lost,  
 She braved the shock and the  
 counter-shock  
 Of hero and traitor bullet and knife  
 While Italy pushed, like a vengeful  
 ghost,  
 That son of the Cursed from  
 Gaeta's rock

## IX

What will ye give her, who could not  
 deliver  
 German Princesses ? A laurel-  
 wreath  
 All over-scored with your signa-  
 tures  
 Graces, Serenities, Highnesses ever ?  
 Mock her not fresh from the truth  
 of Death  
 Conscious of dignities higher  
 than yours

## X

What will ye put in your casket shut,  
 Ladies of Paris, in sympathy's  
 name ?  
 Guizot's daughter, what have  
 you brought her ?  
 Withered immortelles, long ago cut  
 For guilty dynasties perished in  
 shame,  
 Putrid to memory, Guizot's  
 daughter ?



## XI

Ah poor queen ! so young and serene !  
 What shall we do for her, now  
   hope's done,  
   Standing at Rome in these ruins  
   old,  
 She too a ruin and no more a queen ?  
 Leave her that diadem made by  
   the sun  
   Turning her hair to an innocent  
   gold

## XII

Ay ! bring close to her, as 'twere a  
   rose, to her  
   Yon free child from an Apennine  
   city  
   Singing for Italy,—dumb in the  
   place !  
 Something like solace, let us suppose,  
   to her  
   Given, in that homage of wonder  
   and pity,  
   By his pure eyes to her beautiful  
   face

## XIII

Nature, excluded savagely brooded,  
 Ruined all quendum and dogmas  
   of state,—  
   Then in reaction remorseful and  
   mild,  
 Rescues the womanhood, nearly  
   eluded,  
   Shows her what's sweetest in  
   womanly fate—  
   Sunshine from Heaven, and the  
   eyes of a child

## THE NORTH AND THE SOUTH

[THE LAST POEM]

ROME, MAY, 1861

## I

" Now give us lands where the olives  
   grow,"  
   Cried the North to the South,  
 " Where the sun with a golden mouth  
   can blow  
 Blue bubbles of grapes down a vine-  
   yard-row !"  
   Cried the North to the South  
 " Now give us men from the sunless  
   plain,"  
   Cried the South to the North,  
 " By need of work in the snow and the  
   rain,

Made strong, and brave by familiar  
   pain !"

Cried the South to the North

## II

" Give lucider hills and intenser seas,"  
   Said the North to the South  
 " Since ever by symbols and bright  
   degrees  
 Art, childlike, climbs to the dear  
   Lord's knees,"  
   Said the North to the South  
 " Give strenuous souls for belief and  
   prayer,"  
   Said the South to the North,  
 " That stand in the dark on the lowest  
   stair,  
 While affirming of God, ' He is cer-  
   tainly there,'" "  
   Said the South to the North

## III

" Yet oh, for the skies that are softer  
   and higher !"  
   Sighed the North to the South,  
 " For the flowers that blaze, and the  
   trees that aspire,  
 And the insects made of a song or a  
   fire !"  
   Sighed the North to the South  
 " And oh, for a seer to discern the  
   same !"  
   Sighed the South to the North,  
 " For a poet's tongue of baptismal  
   flame,  
 To call the tree or the flower by its  
   name !"  
   Sighed the South to the North

## IV

The North sent therefore a man of men  
   As a grace to the South,  
 And thus to Rome came Andersen  
 —" *Alas, but must you take him  
   again ?*"  
   Said the South to the North

## TRANSLATIONS

## PARAPHRASE ON THEOCRITUS

## THE CYCLOPS

(IDYL XI)

AND so an easier life our Cyclops drew,  
   The ancient Polyphemus, who in  
   youth  
 Loved Galatea while the manhood  
   grew

Adown his cheeks and darkened  
 round his mouth  
 No jot he cared for apples, olives,  
 roses,  
 Love made him mad the whole  
 world was neglected,  
 The very sheep went backward to  
 their closes  
 From out the fair green pastures,  
 self-directed  
 And singing Galatea, thus, he  
 wore  
 The sunrise down along the weedy  
 shore  
 And pined alone, and felt the cruel  
 wound  
 Beneath his heart, which Cypris'  
 arrow bore  
 With a deep pang, but, so, the  
 cure was found,  
 And sitting on a lofty rock he  
 cast  
 His eyes upon the sea, and sang  
 at last —

“ O whitest Galatea can it be  
 That thou shouldst spurn me off  
 who love thee so ?  
 More white than curds, my girl, thou  
 art to see,  
 More meek than lambs, more full of  
 leaping glee  
 Than kids, and brighter than the  
 early glow  
 On grapes that swell to ripen,—sour  
 like thee !  
 Thou comest to me with the fragrant  
 sleep  
 And with the fragrant sleep thou  
 goest from me,  
 Thou fliest fliest, as a frightened  
 sheep  
 Flies the grey wolf !—yet Love  
 did overcome me,  
 So long,—I loved thee, maiden, first  
 of all  
 When down the hills (my mother  
 fast beside thee)  
 I saw thee stray to pluck the summer-  
 fall  
 Of hyacinth bells, and went myself  
 to guide thee  
 And since my eyes have seen thee,  
 they can leave thee  
 No more, from that day's light !  
 But thou by Zeus,

Thou wilt not care for *that*, to let it  
 grieve thee !  
 I know thee, fair one, why thou  
 springest loose  
 From my arm round thee Why ?  
 I tell thee, Dear !  
 One shaggy eyebrow draws its  
 smudging road  
 Straight through my ample front,  
 from ear to ear,—  
 One eye rolls underneath, and  
 yawning, broad  
 Flat nostrils feel the bulging lips too  
 near  
 Yet ho, ho !—I,—whatever I  
 appear—  
 Do feed a thousand oxen ! When  
 I have done  
 I milk the cows and drink the milk  
 that's best !  
 I lack no cheese, while summer  
 keeps the sun,  
 And after, in the cold, it's ready prest !  
 And then, I know to sing, as there  
 is none  
 Of all the Cyclops can a song  
 of thee  
 Sweep apple of my soul, on love's fair  
 tree  
 And of myself who love thee  
 till the West  
 Forgets the light, and all but I have  
 rest  
 I feed for thee, besides, eleven fair  
 does,  
 And all in fawn, and four tame  
 whelps of bears  
 Come to me Sweet ! thou shalt have  
 all of those  
 In change for love ! I will not  
 halve the shares  
 Leave the blue sea with pure white  
 arms extended  
 To the dry shore, and, in my  
 cave's recess  
 Thou shalt be gladder for the noon-  
 light ended,—  
 For here belaulrels, spiral cypresses,  
 Dark ivy, and a vine whose leaves  
 enfold  
 Most luscious grapes, and here is  
 water cold,  
 The wooded Ætna pours down  
 through the trees  
 From the white snows—which gods  
 were scarce too bold

To drink in turn with nectar    Who  
 with these  
 Would choose the salt wave of the  
 lukewarm seas ?  
 Nay, look on me !    If I am hairy and  
 rough,  
 I have an oak's heart in me ,  
 there's a fire  
 In these grey ashes which burns hot  
 enough ,  
 And when I burn for *thee*, I grudge  
 the pyre  
 No fuel       not my soul, nor this  
 one eye,—  
 Most precious thing I have, because  
 thereby  
 I see thee, Fairest !    Out, alas ! I wish  
 My mother had borne me finned like  
 a fish,  
 That I might plunge down in the  
 ocean near thee,  
 And kiss thy glittering hand be-  
 tween the weeds,  
 If still thy face were turned , and I  
 would bear thee  
 Each lily white, and poppy fair  
 that bleeds  
 Its red heart down its leaves !—one  
 gift, for hours  
 Of summer—one, for winter ,  
 since, to cheer thee,—  
 I could not bring at once all kinds of  
 flowers  
 Even now, girl, now, I fain would  
 learn to swim,  
 If stranger in a ship sailed nigh, I  
 wis,—  
 That I may know how sweet a thing  
 it is  
 To live down with you, in the Deep  
 and Dim !  
 Come up, O Galatea, from the ocean,  
 And having come, forget again to  
 go !  
 As I who sing out here my heart's  
 emotion,  
 Could sit for ever    Come up from  
 below !  
 Come keep my flocks beside me, milk  
 my kine,—  
 Come, press my cheese, distrain my  
 whey and curd !  
 Ah, mother ! she alone       that  
 mother of mine  
 Did wrong me sore !    I blame her !  
 —Not a word

Of kindly intercession did she address  
 Thine ear with for my sake , and  
 ne'ertheless  
 She saw me wasting, wasting, day  
 by day !  
 Both head and feet were aching, I  
 will say,  
 All sick for grief, as I myself was sick !  
 O Cyclops, Cyclops, whither hast  
 thou sent  
 Thy soul on fluttering wings ?    If  
 thou wert bent  
 On turning bowls, or pulling green  
 and thick  
 The sprouts to give thy lambskins,  
 —thou wouldst make thee  
 A wiser Cyclops than for what we  
 take thee  
 Milk dry the present !    Why pursue  
 too quick  
 That future which is fugitive aright ?  
 Thy Galatea thou shalt haply  
 find,—  
 Or else a maiden fairer and more  
 kind ,  
 For many girls do call me through the  
 night,  
 And, as they call, do laugh out  
 silverly  
 I, too, am something in the world, I  
 see ! ”  
 While thus the Cyclops love and  
 lambs did fold,  
 Ease came with song, he could not buy  
 with gold

# PARAPHRASES ON APULEIUS

## PSYCHE GAZING ON CUPID

(METAMORPH , LIB IV)

THEN Psyche, weak in body and soul,  
 put on  
 The cruelty of Fate, in place of  
 strength  
 She raised the lamp to see what  
 should be done,  
 And seized the steel, and was a  
 man at length  
 In courage, though a woman !    Yes,  
 but when,  
 The light fell on the bed whereby  
 she stood  
 To view the “ *beast* ” that lay there,  
 —certes, then,

She saw the gentlest, sweetest  
 beast in wood—  
 Even Cupid's self, the beauteous god !  
 more beauteous  
 For that sweet sleep across his eye-  
 lids dim !  
 The light, the lady carried as she  
 viewed,  
 Did blush for pleasure as it lighted  
 him,  
 The dagger trembled from its aim  
 unduteous ,  
 And *she* oh, *she*—amazed and  
 soul-distraught,  
 And fainting in her whiteness like a  
 veil,  
 Slid down upon her knees, and,  
 shuddering, thought  
 To hide—though in her heart—the  
 dagger pale !  
 She would have done it, but her hands  
 did fail  
 To hold the guilty steel, they  
 shivered so,—  
 And feeble, exhausted, unawares she  
 took  
 To gazing on the god,—till, look by  
 look,  
 Her eyes with larger life did fill and  
 glow  
 She saw his golden head alight with  
 curls —  
 She might have guessed their  
 brightness in the dark  
 By that ambrosial smell of heavenly  
 mark !  
 She saw the milky brow, more pure  
 than pearls,  
 The purple of the cheeks, divinely  
 sundered  
 By the globed ringlets, as they  
 ghled free,  
 Some back, some forwards—all so  
 radiantly,  
 That, as she watched them there,  
 she never wondered  
 To see the lamplight, where it  
 touched them, tremble  
 On the god's shoulders, too, she  
 marked his wings  
 Shine faintly at the edges and  
 resemble  
 A flower that's near to blow The poet sings  
 And lover sighs, that Love is  
 fugitive ,

And certes, though these pinions lay  
 reposing,  
 The feathers on them seemed to  
 stir and live  
 As if by instinct, closing and unclosing  
 Meantime the god's fair body slum-  
 bered deep  
 All worthy of Venus, in his shining  
 sleep ,  
 While at the bed's foot lay the  
 quiver, bow,  
 And darts,—his arms of godhead  
 Psyche gazed  
 With eyes that drank the wonders  
 in,—said,—“ Lo,  
 Be these my husband's arms ? ”—  
 and straightway raised  
 An arrow from the quiver-case, and  
 tried  
 Its point against her finger,—trem-  
 bling till  
 She pushed it in too deeply (foolish  
 bride !)  
 And made her blood some dewdrops  
 small distil,  
 And learnt to love Love, of her own  
 good-will

## PSYCHE WAFTED BY ZEPHYRUS

(METAMORPH, LIB IV)

WHILE Psyche wept upon the rock  
 forsaken,  
 Alone despairing, dreading,—  
 gradually  
 By Zephyrus she was enwrapt and  
 taken  
 Still trembling,—like the lilies  
 planted high,—  
 Through all her fair white limbs  
 Her vesture spread,  
 Her very bosom eddying with  
 surprise,—  
 He drew her slowly from the moun-  
 tain-head,  
 And bore her down the valleys with  
 wet eyes,  
 And laid her in the lap of a green dell  
 As soft with grass and flowers as  
 any nest,  
 With trees beside her, and a limpid  
 well  
 Yet Love was not far off from all  
 that Rest

## PSYCHE AND PAN

(METAMORPH, LIB V)

THE gentle River, in her Cupid's honour,

Because he used to warm the very wave,

Did ripple aside, instead of closing on her,

And cast up Psyche, with a refluence brave,

Upon the flowery bank,—all sad and sinning

Then Pan, the rural god, by chance was leaning

Along the brow of waters as they wound,

Kissing the reed-nymph till she sank to ground,

And teaching, without knowledge of the meaning,

To run her voice in music after his Down many a shifting note, (the goats around,

In wandering pasture and most leaping bliss,

Drawn on to crop the river's flowery hair)

And as the hoary god beheld her there,

The poor, worn fainting Psyche ! —knowing all

The grief she suffered, he did gently call

Her name, and softly comfort her despair —

“ O wise, fair lady, I am rough and rude,

And yet experienced through my weary age !

And if I read aright, as soothsayer should,

Thy faltering steps of heavy pilgrimage,

Thy paleness, deep as snow we cannot see

The roses through,—thy sighs of quick returning,

Thine eyes that seem, themselves, two souls in mourning,—

Thou lovest, girl, too well, and bitterly !

But hear me rush no more to a headlong fall

Seek no more deaths ! leave wail, lay sorrow down,

And pray the sovran god, and use withal

Such prayer as best may suit a tender youth,

Well-pleased to bend to flatteries from thy mouth

And feel them stir the myrtle of his crown ”

—So spake the shepherd-god, and answer none

Gave Psyche in return but silently She did him homage with a bended knee

And took the onward path —

## PSYCHE PROPITIATING CERES

(METAMORPH, LIB VI)

THEN mother Ceres from afar beheld her,

While Psyche touched, with reverent fingers meek,

The temple's scythes, and with a cry compelled her —

“ O wretched Psyche, Venus roams to seek

Thy wandering footsteps round the weary earth,

Anxious and maddened, and adjures thee forth

To accept the imputed pang, and let her wreak

Full vengeance with full force of deity !

Yet *thou*, forsooth, art in my temple here,

Touching my scythes, assuming my degree,

And daring to have thoughts that are not fear ! ”

—But Psyche clung to her feet, and as they moved

Rained tears along their track, tear dropped on tear,

And drew the dust on in her trailing locks,

And still, with passionate prayer, the charge disproved —

“ Now, by thy right hand's gathering from the shocks

Of golden corn,—and by thy glad-some rites

Of harvest,—and thy consecrated sights

Shut safe and mute in chests,—and  
 by the course  
 Of thy slave-dragons,—and the driv-  
 ing force  
 Of ploughs along Sicilian glebes pro-  
 found —  
 By thy swift chariot,—by thy stead-  
 fast ground,—  
 By all those nuptial torches that  
 departed  
 With thy lost daughter,—and by  
 those that shone  
 Back with her when she came again  
 glad-hearted,—  
 And by all other mysteries which  
 are done  
 In silence at Eleusis—I beseech thee,  
 O Ceres, take some pity, and abstain  
 From giving to my soul extremest  
 pain  
 Who am the wretched Psyche!  
 Let me teach thee  
 A little mercy, and have thy leave  
 to spend  
 A few days only in thy garnered corn,  
 Until that wrathful goddess, at the  
 end,  
 Shall feel her hate grow mild, the  
 longer boine,—  
 Or till, alas!—this faintness at my  
 breast  
 Pass from me, and my spirit  
 apprehend  
 From life-long woe a breath-time  
 hour of rest!"  
 —But Ceres answered, "I am moved  
 indeed  
 By prayers so most with tears  
 and would defend  
 The poor beseecher from more utter  
 need  
 But where old oaths, anterior ties,  
 commend,  
 I cannot fail to a sister, lie to a  
 friend,  
 As Venus is to me Depart with  
 speed!"

PSYCHE AND THE EAGLE  
 (METAMORPH, LIB VI)

BUT sovran Jove's rapacious Bird,  
 the regal  
 High percher on the lightning, the  
 great eagle,  
 Drove down with rushing wings,  
 and,—thinking how,

By Cupid's help, he bore from Ida's  
 brow  
 A cup-boy for his master,—he in-  
 clined  
 To yield, in just return, an influence  
 kind,  
 The god being honoured in his lady's  
 woe  
 And thus the Bird wheeled downward  
 from the track,  
 Gods follow gods in to the level low  
 Of that poor face of Psyche left in  
 wrack  
 —"Now fie, thou simple girl!" the  
 Bird began,  
 "For if thou think to steal and carry  
 back  
 A drop of holiest stream that ever  
 ran,  
 No simpler thought, methinks, were  
 found in man  
 What! knowst thou not these Sty-  
 gian waters be  
 Most holy, even to Jove? that as, on  
 earth  
 Men swear by gods, and by the thun-  
 der's worth,  
 Even so the heavenly gods do utter  
 forth  
 Their oaths by Styx's flowing majesty?  
 And yet, one little urnful, I agree  
 To grant thy need!" Whereat, all  
 hastily,  
 He takes it, fills it from the willing  
 wave,  
 And bears it in his beak, incarnadined  
 By the last Titan-prey he screamed  
 to have,  
 And, striking calmly out, against the  
 wind  
 Vast wings on each side,—there,  
 where Psyche stands,  
 He drops the urn down in her lifted  
 hands

PSYCHE AND CERBERUS  
 (METAMORPH, LIB VI)

A MIGHTY dog with three colossal  
 necks,  
 And heads in grand proportion,  
 vast as fear,  
 With jaws that bark the thunder out  
 that breaks  
 In most innocuous dread for  
 ghosts anear,

Who are safe in death from sorrow  
 he reclines  
 Across the threshold of queen Proserpine's  
 Dark-sweeping halls, and, there, for  
 Pluto's spouse,  
 Doth guard the entrance of the  
 empty house  
 When Psyche threw the cake to him,  
 once amain  
 He howled up wildly from his hunger-  
 pain,  
 And was still, after —

## PSYCHE AND PROSERPINE

(METAMORPH, LIB VI)

THEN Psyche entered in to Proserpine  
 In the dark house, and straightway  
 did decline  
 With meek denial the luxurious seat  
 The liberal board for welcome  
 strangers spread,  
 But sat down lowly at the dark  
 queen's feet,  
 And told her tale, and brake her  
 oaten bread  
 And when she had given the pyx in  
 humble duty,  
 And told how Venus did entreat  
 the queen  
 To fill it up with only one day's beauty  
 She used in Hades, star-bright and  
 serene  
 To beautify the Cyprian, who had  
 been  
 All spoilt with grief in nursing her  
 sick boy,—  
 Then Proserpine, in malice and in joy,  
 Smiled in the shade, and took the  
 pyx, and put  
 A secret in it, and so, filled and  
 shut,  
 Gave it again to Psyche Could  
 she tell  
 It held no beauty, but a dream  
 of hell?

## PSYCHE AND VENUS

(METAMORPH, LIB VI)

AND Psyche brought to Venus what  
 was sent  
 By Pluto's spouse, the paler, that  
 she went  
 So low to seek it, down the dark  
 descent

MERCURY CARRIES PSYCHE TO  
OLYMPUS

(METAMORPH, LIB VI)

THEN Jove commanded the god  
 Mercury  
 To float up Psyche from the earth  
 And she  
 Sprang at the first word, as the foun-  
 tain springs,  
 And shot up bright and rustling  
 through his wings

## MARRIAGE OF PSYCHE AND CUPID

(METAMORPH, LIB VI)

AND Jove's right hand approached  
 the ambrosial bowl  
 To Psyche's lips, that scarce dared  
 yet to smile,—  
 "Drink, O my daughter, and ac-  
 quaint thy soul  
 With deathless uses, and be glad  
 the while!  
 No more shall Cupid leave thy lovely  
 side,  
 Thy marriage-joy begins for never-  
 ending"  
 While yet he spake,—the nuptial  
 feast supplied,—  
 The bridegroom on the festive  
 couch was bending  
 O'er Psyche in his bosom—Jove, the  
 same,  
 On Juno and the other deities,  
 Alike ranged round The rural cup-  
 boy came  
 And poured Jove's nectar out with  
 shining eyes,  
 While Bacchus, for the others, did as  
 much,  
 And Vulcan spread the meal, and  
 all the Hours  
 Made all things purple with a  
 sprinkle of flowers,  
 Or roses chiefly, not to say the touch  
 Of their sweet fingers, and the  
 Graces glided  
 Their balm around, and the Muses,  
 through the air  
 Struck out clear voices, which were  
 still divided  
 By that divinest song Apollo there  
 Intoned to his lute, while Aphro-  
 dite fair

Did float her beauty along the tune,  
 and play  
 The notes right with her feet And  
 thus, the day  
 Through every perfect mood of joy  
 was carried  
 The Muses sang their chorus,  
 Satyrus  
 Did blow his pipes, Pan touched  
 his reed,—and thus  
 At last were Cupid and his Psyche  
 married

## PARAPHRASES ON NONNUS

HOW BACCHUS FINDS ARIADNE  
SLEEPING

(DIONYSIACA, LIB XLVII)

WHEN Bacchus first beheld the deso-  
 late  
 And sleeping Ariadne, wonder straight  
 Was mixed with love in his great  
 golden eyes,  
 He turned to his Bacchantes in sur-  
 prise,  
 And said with guarded voice—  
 "Hush! strike no more  
 Your brazen cymbals, keep those  
 voices still  
 Of voice and pipe, and since ye  
 stand before  
 Queen Cypris, let her slumber as  
 she will!  
 And yet the cestus is not here in proof  
 A Grace, perhaps, whom sleep has  
 stolen aloof  
 In which case, as the morning shines  
 in view,  
 Wake this Aglaia!—yet in Naxos,  
 who  
 Would veil a Grace so? Hush!  
 And if that she  
 Were Hebe, which of all the gods can  
 be  
 The pourer-out of wine? or if we think  
 She's like the shining moon by  
 ocean's brink,  
 The guide of herds,—why, could  
 she sleep without  
 Endymion's breath on her cheek? or  
 if I doubt  
 Of silver-footed Thetis, used to tread  
 These shores—even *she* (in reverence  
 be it said)  
 Has no such rosy beauty to dress deep

With the blue waves The Loxian  
 goddess might  
 Repose so from her hunting-toil  
 aright  
 Beside the sea, since toil gives birth  
 to sleep,  
 But who would find her with her  
 tunic loose,  
 Thus? Stand off, Thracian! stand  
 off! Do not leap,  
 Not this way! Leave that piping,  
 since I choose,  
 O dearest Pan, and let Athenè rest!  
 And yet if she be Pallas truly  
 guessed  
 Her lance is—where? her helm and  
 ægis—where?"  
 —As Bacchus closed, the miserable  
 Fair  
 Awoke at last, sprang upward from  
 the sands,  
 And gazing wild on that wild throng  
 that stands  
 Around, around her, and no Theseus  
 there!—  
 Her voice went moaning over shore  
 and sea,  
 Beside the halcyon's cry, she called  
 her love,  
 She named her hero, and raged mad-  
 deningly  
 Against the brine of waters, and,  
 above,  
 Sought the ship's track and cursed  
 the hours she slept,  
 And still the chiefest execration swept  
 Against queen Paphia, mother of the  
 ocean,  
 And cursed and prayed by times in  
 her emotion  
 The winds all round  
 Her grief did make her glorious, her  
 despair  
 Adorned her with its weight Poor  
 wailing child!  
 She looked like Venus when the  
 goddess smiled  
 At liberty of godship, debonair,  
 Poor Ariadne! and her eyelids fair  
 Hid looks beneath them lent her by  
 Persuasion  
 And every Grace with tears of Love's  
 own passion  
 She wept long, then she spake—  
 "Sweet sleep did com-



While sweetest Theseus went Oh,  
 glad and dumb,  
 I wish he had left me still ' for in my  
 sleep  
 I saw his Athens, and did gladly keep  
 My new bride-state within my  
 Theseus' hall,  
 And heard the pomp of Hymen, and  
 the call  
 Of ' Ariadne, Ariadne,' sung  
 In choral joy, and there, with joy I  
 hung  
 Spring-blossoms round love's altar '  
 —ay and wore  
 A wreath myself, and felt *him* ever-  
 more,  
 Oh evermore beside me, with his  
 mighty  
 Grave head bowed down in prayer  
 to Aphrodite '  
 Why, what a sweet, sweet dream '  
*He* went with it,  
 And left me here unwedded where I  
 sit '  
 Persuasion help me ! The dark  
 night did make me  
 A brideship, the fair morning takes  
 away,  
 My Love had left me when the Hour  
 did wake me,  
 And while I dreamed of marriage,  
 as I say  
 And blest it well, my blessed Theseus  
 left me  
 And thus the sleep, I loved so, has  
 bereft me  
 Speak to me, rocks, and tell my grief  
 to-day,  
 Who stole my love of Athens ? "

HOW BACCHUS COMFORTS ARIADNE  
 (DIONYSIACA, LIB XLVII)

THEN Bacchus' subtle speech her  
 sorrow crossed —  
 " O maiden, dost thou mourn for  
 having lost  
 The false Athenian heart ? and dost  
 thou still  
 Take thought of Theseus, when thou  
 mayst at will  
 Have Bacchus for a husband ? Bac-  
 chus bright !  
 A god in place of mortal ! Yes, and  
 though

The mortal youth be charming in  
 thy sight,  
 That man of Athens cannot strive  
 below,  
 In beauty and valour, with my deity !  
 Thou'lt tell me of the labyrinthine  
 dweller,  
 The fierce man-bull he slew I pray  
 thee, be,  
 Fair Ariadne, the true deed's true  
 teller,  
 And mention thy clue's help ! be-  
 cause, forsooth,  
 Thine armed Athenian hero had not  
 found  
 A power to fight on that prodigious  
 ground,  
 Unless a lady in her rosy youth  
 Had lingered near him not to speak  
 the truth  
 Too definitely out till names be  
 known—  
 Like Paphia's—Love's—and Ariadne's  
 own  
 Thou wilt not say that Athens can  
 compare  
 With Æther, nor that Minos rules  
 like Zeus,  
 Nor yet that Gnosus has such golden  
 air  
 As high Olympus Ha ! for noble  
 use  
 We came to Naxos ! Love has well  
 intended  
 To change thy bridegroom ! Happy  
 thou, defended  
 From entering in thy Theseus' earthly  
 hall,  
 That thou mayst hear the laughters  
 rise and fall  
 Instead, where Bacchus rules ! Or  
 wilt thou choose  
 A still-surpassing glory ?—take it  
 all,—  
 A heavenly house, Kronion's self for  
 kin,—  
 A place where Cassiopea sits within  
 Inferior light, for all her daughter's  
 sake,  
 Since Perseus, even amid the stars,  
 must take  
 Andromeda in chains ethereal !  
 But *I* will wreath *thee*, sweet, an  
 astral crown,  
 And as my queen and spouse thou  
 shalt be known—

Mine, the crown-lover's!'' Thus,  
 at length, he proved  
 His comfort on her, and the maid  
 was moved,  
 And casting Theseus' memory down  
 the brine,  
 She straight received the troth of her  
 divine  
 Fair Bacchus, Love stood by to close  
 the rite  
 The marriage-chorus struck up clear  
 and light,  
 Flowers sprouted fast about the cham-  
 ber green,  
 And with spring-garlands on their  
 heads, I ween,  
 The Orchomenian dancers came along  
 And danced their rounds in Naxos to  
 the song  
 A Hamadryad sang a nuptial dit  
 Right shrilly and a Naiad sat be-  
 side  
 A fountain, with her bare foot shelv-  
 ing it,  
 And hymned of Ariadne, beauteous  
 bride  
 Whom thus the god of grapes had  
 deified  
 Ortygia sang out, louder than her  
 wont,  
 An ode which Phoebus gave her to  
 be tried,  
 And leapt in chorus, with her stead-  
 fast front,  
 While prophet Love, the stars have  
 called a brother,  
 Burnt in his crown, and twined in  
 one another  
 His love-flower with the purple roses,  
 given  
 In type of that new crown assigned  
 in heaven

## PARAPHRASE ON HESIOD

BACCHUS AND ARIADNE

(THEOG 947)

THE golden-haired Bacchus did  
 espouse  
 That fairest Ariadne Minos' daugh-  
 ter,  
 And made her wifhood blossom in  
 the house,  
 Where such protective gifts Kro-  
 nion brought her,  
 Nor Death nor Age could find her  
 when they sought her

B P.

## PARAPHRASE ON EURIPIDES

ANTISTROPHE

(TROADES, 853 \*)

LOVE, Love, who once didst pass the  
 Dardan portals,  
 Because of heavenly passion!  
 Who once didst lift up Troy in exult-  
 ation,  
 To mingle in thy bond the high  
 Immortals!—  
 Love, turned from his own  
 name  
 To Zeus's shame,  
 Can help no more at all  
 And Eos' self, the fair, white-steeded  
 Morning—  
 Her light which blesses other lands  
 returning,  
 Has changed to a gloomy pall!  
 She looked across the land with eyes  
 of amber,—  
 She saw the city's fall,—  
 She who, in pure embraces,  
 Had held there, in the hymeneal  
 chamber  
 Her children's father, bright Tithonus  
 old,  
 Whom the four steeds with starry  
 brows and paces  
 Bore on, snatched upward, on the car  
 of gold,  
 And with him, all the land's full hope  
 of joy!  
 The love-charms of the gods are vain  
 for Troy

## PARAPHRASES ON HOMER

HECTOR AND ANDROMACHE

(ILIAD, LIB VI)

SHE rushed to meet him the nurse  
 following  
 Bore on her bosom the unsaddened  
 child,  
 A simple babe prince Hector's well-  
 loved son,  
 Like a star shining when the world is  
 dark  
 Scamandrius, Hector called him,  
 but the rest  
 Named him Astyanax, the city's  
 prince,

\* Rendered after Mr Burges' reading, in  
 some respects—not quite all

P P

Because that Hector only had saved  
Troy  
He, when he saw his son, smiled  
silently,  
While, dropping tears, Andromache  
pressed on,  
And clung to his hand, and spake,  
and named his name

"Hector, my best one,—thine own  
nobleness  
Must needs undo thee   Pity hast  
thou none  
For this young child, and this most  
sad myself,  
Who soon shall be thy widow—since  
that soon  
The Greeks will slay thee in the  
general rush—  
And then, for me, what refuge, 'reft  
of thee  
But to go graveward? Then, no  
comfort more  
Shall touch me as in the old sad  
times thou know'st—  
Grief only—grief! I have no father  
now  
No mother mild! Achilles the  
divine,  
He slew my father sacked his lofty  
Thebes  
Cilicia's populous city and slew its  
king  
Eetion—father!—did not spoil the  
corse  
Because the Greek revered him in his  
soul  
But burnt the body with its dædal  
arms,  
And poured the dust out gently  
Round that tomb  
The Orca's daughters of the goat-  
nursed Zeus  
Tripped in a ring, and planted their  
green elms  
There were seven brothers with me  
in the house  
Who all went down to Hades in one  
day—  
For he slew all, Achilles the divine,  
Famed for his swift feet,—slain  
among their herds  
Of cloven-footed bulls and flocking  
sheep!  
My mother too, who queened it o'er  
the woods

Of Hippoplacia, he, with other spoil,  
Seized,—and, for golden ransom,  
freed too late,—  
Since, as she went home, arrowy  
Artemis  
Met her and slew her at my father's  
door  
But—O my Hector,—thou art still to  
me  
Father and mother!—yes, and  
brother dear,  
O thou, who art my sweetest spouse  
beside!  
Come now, and take me into pity!  
Stay  
I' the town here with us! Do not  
make thy child  
An orphan, nor a widow thy poor  
wife!  
Call up the people to the fig-tree,  
where  
The city is most accessible the wall  
Most easy of assault!—for thrice  
thereby  
The boldest Greeks have mounted to  
the breach,—  
Both Ajaxes, the famed Idomeneus,  
Two sons of Atreus, and the noble one  
Of Tydeus,—whether taught by some  
wise seer,  
Or by their own souls prompted and  
inspired"

Great Hector answered—"Lady,  
for these things  
It is my part to care   And I fear  
most  
My Trojans, and their daughters, and  
their wives  
Who through their long veils would  
glance scorn at me  
If, coward-like, I shunned the open  
war  
Nor doth my own soul prompt me to  
that end!  
I learnt to be a brave man constantly,  
And to fight foremost where my  
Trojans fight,  
And vindicate my father's glory and  
mine—  
Because I know, by instinct and my  
soul,  
The day comes that our sacred Troy  
must fall,  
And Priam and his people   Knowing  
which,

I have no such grief for all my Trojans' sake,  
 For Hecuba's, for Priam's, our old king,  
 Not for my brothers', who so many  
 and brave  
 Shall bite the dust before our  
 enemies,—  
 As, sweet, for *thee*!—to think some  
 mailed Greek  
 Shall lead thee weeping and deprive  
 thy life  
 Of the free sun-sight—that, when  
 gone away  
 To Argos thou shalt throw the distaff  
 there,  
 Not for thy uses—or shalt carry in-  
 stead  
 Upon thy loathing brow, as heavy as  
 doom,  
 The water of Greek wells—Messers'  
 own,  
 Or Hyperea's!—that some stander-  
 by,  
 Marking my tears fall, shall say,  
 'This is she,  
 The wife of that same Hector who  
 fought best  
 Of all the Trojans, when all fought for  
 Troy—'  
 Ay!—and, so speaking, shall renew  
 thy pang  
 That, 'reft of him so named, thou  
 shouldst survive  
 To a slave's life! But earth shall  
 hide my corse  
 Ere that shriek sound, wherewith  
 thou art dragged from Troy''

Thus Hector spake, and stretched his  
 arms to his child  
 Against the nurse's breast, with  
 childly cry,  
 The boy clung back, and shunned  
 his father's face,  
 And feared the glittering brass and  
 waving hair  
 Of the high helmet nodding horror  
 down  
 The father smiled, the mother could  
 not choose  
 But smile too Then he lifted from  
 his brow  
 The helm and set it on the ground to  
 shine  
 Then, kissed his dear child—raised  
 him with both arms,

And thus invoked Zeus and the  
 general gods —

" Zeus, and all godships! grant this  
 boy of mine  
 To be the Trojans' help as I myself,—  
 To live a brave life and rule well in  
 Troy!  
 Till men shall say, 'The son exceeds  
 the sire  
 By a far glory' Let him bring home  
 spoil  
 Heroic, and make glad his mother's  
 heart "

With which prayer, to his wife's  
 extended arms  
 He gave the child, and she received  
 him straight  
 To her bosom's fragrance—smiling  
 up her tears  
 Hector gazed on her till his soul was  
 moved,  
 Then softly touched her with his  
 hand and spake

" My best one—'ware of passion and  
 excess  
 In any fear There's no man in the  
 world  
 Can send me to the grave apart from  
 fate —

And no man sweet, I tell thee  
 can fly fate—  
 No good nor bad man Doom is self-  
 fulfilled  
 But now, go home, and ply thy  
 woman's task  
 Of wheel and distaff! bid thy maidens  
 haste

Their occupation War's a care for  
 men—  
 For all men born in Troy, and chief  
 for me '

Thus spake the noble Hector, and  
 resumed  
 His crested helmet, while his spouse  
 went home,  
 But as she went still looked back  
 lovingly,  
 Dropping the tears from her reverted  
 face

THE DAUGHTERS OF PANDARUS  
 (ODYSS., LIB. XX)

AND so these daughters fair of Pan-  
 darus

The whirlwinds took The gods had  
slain their kin  
They were left orphans in their  
father's house  
And Aphrodite came to comfort  
them  
With incense, luscious honey, and  
fragrant wine,  
And Here gave them beauty of face  
and soul  
Beyond all women, purest Artemis  
Endowed them with her stature and  
white grace,  
And Pallas taught their hands to  
flash along  
Her famous looms Then, bright  
with deity,  
Toward far Olympus, Aphrodite went  
To ask of Zeus (who has his thunder-  
joys  
And his full knowledge of man's  
mingled fate)  
How best to crown those other gifts  
with love  
And worthy marriage but, what time  
she went,  
The ravishing Harpies snatched the  
maids away,  
And gave them up, for all their loving  
eyes,  
To serve the Furies who hate con-  
stantly

## ANOTHER VERSION

So the storms bore the daughters of  
Pandarus out into thrall—  
The gods slew their parents, the or-  
phans were left in the hall  
And there, came, to feed their young  
lives, Aphrodite divine,  
With the incense, the sweet-tasting  
honey, the sweet-smelling wine,  
Here brought them her wit above  
woman's, and beauty of face,  
And pure Artemis gave them her  
stature, that form might have  
grace  
And Athenè instructed their hands in  
her works of renown,  
Then, afar to Olympus, divine  
Aphrodite moved on  
To complete other gifts, by uniting  
each girl to a mate,  
She sought Zeus who has joy in the  
thunder and knowledge of fate,

Whether mortals have good chance  
or ill ! But the Harpies a-late  
In the storm came, and swept off the  
maidens, and gave them to wait,  
With that love in their eyes, on the  
Furies who constantly hate

## PARAPHRASE ON ANACREON

## ODE TO THE SWALLOW

THOU indeed, little Swallow,  
A sweet yearly comer,  
Art building a hollow  
New nest every summer,  
And straight dost depart  
Where no gazing can follow,  
Past Memphis, down Nile !  
Ah ! but Love all the while  
Builds his nest in my heart,  
Through the cold winter-weeks  
And as one Love takes flight,  
Comes another, O Swallow,  
In an egg warm and white,  
And another is callow  
And the large gaping beaks  
Chirp all day and all night  
And the Loves who are older  
Help the young and the poor Loves,  
And the young Loves grown bolder  
Increase by the score Loves—  
Why, what can be done ?  
If a noise comes from one,  
Can I bear all this rout of a hundred  
and more Loves ?

## PARAPHRASES ON HEINE

## [THE LAST TRANSLATION]

ROME, 1860

I

I

OUT of my own great woe  
I make my little songs,  
Which rustle their feathers in throngs  
And beat on her heart even so

II

They found the way, for their part,  
Yet come again, and complain,  
Complain, and are not fain  
To say what they saw in her heart

II

I

ART thou indeed so adverse ?  
Art thou so changed indeed ?  
Against the woman who wrongs me  
I cry to the world in my need

## II

O recreant lips unthankful,  
How could ye speak evil, say,  
Of the man who so well has kissed  
you  
On many a fortunate day ?

## III

## I

My child, we were two children,  
Small, merry by childhood's law,  
We used to crawl to the hen-house  
And hide ourselves in the straw

## II

We crowed like cocks, and whenever  
The passers near us drew—  
Cock-a-doodle ! they thought  
'Twas a real cock that crew

## III

The boxes about our courtyard  
We carpeted to our mind,  
And lived there both together—  
Kept house in a noble kind

## IV

The neighbour's old cat often  
Came to pay us a visit,  
We made her a bow and curtsy,  
Each with a compliment in it

## V

After her health we asked,  
Our care and regard to evince—  
(We have made the very same  
speeches  
To many an old cat since)

## VI

We also sat and wisely  
Discoursed, as old folk do,  
Complaining how all went better  
In those good times we knew,—

## VII

How love and truth and believing  
Had left the world to itself,  
And how so dear was the coffee,  
And how so rare was the pelf

## VIII

The children's games are over,  
The rest is over with youth—  
The world, the good games, the good  
times,  
The belief, and the love, and the  
truth

## IV

## I

Thou lovest me not, thou lovest me  
not !  
'Tis scarcely worth a sigh  
Let me look in thy face, and no king  
in his place  
Is a gladder man than I

## II

Thou hatest me well, thou hatest me  
well—  
Thy little red mouth has told  
Let it reach me a kiss, and, however  
it is,  
My child, I am well consoled

## V

## I

My own sweet Love, if thou in the  
grave,  
The darksome grave, wilt be,  
Then will I go down by the side, and  
crave  
Love-room for thee and me

## II

I kiss and caress and press thee wild,  
Thou still, thou cold, thou white !  
I wail, I tremble, and weeping mild,  
Turn to a corpse at the night

## III

The Dead stand up, the midnight  
calls,  
They dance in airy swarms—  
We two keep still where the grave-  
shade falls,  
And I lie on in thine arms

## IV

The Dead stand up, the Judgment-  
day  
Bids such to weal or woe—  
But nought shall trouble us where we  
stay  
Embraced and embracing below

## VI

## I

THE years they come and go,  
The races drop in the grave,  
Yet never the love doth so,  
Which here in my heart I have

## II

Could I see thee but once, one day,  
And sink down so on my knee,  
And die in thy sight while I say,  
"Lady, I love but thee !"

## THE GREEK CHRISTIAN POETS

AND THE ENGLISH POETS

1863

## ADVERTISEMENT

THE following pieces first printed in 1842 by the "Athenæum," are now reprinted with the liberal permission of that Journal

It was intended by its Writer that the account of the Greek Christian Poets should receive corrections or certainly additions a project which new objects of interest came to delay The glancing series of notes upon the English Poets seems suggested by, as well as consequent upon, the account, unless it arose from the publication of Wordsworth's "Poems of Early and Late Years, including The Borderers,"—in the form of a review of which the latter part of the paper originally appeared the former was occasioned by "The Book of the Poets," a compilation of the day

Both performances, laid away long ago, and only lately unfolded for the first time were perhaps almost forgotten by their Author, but on the whole in all likelihood, some way or other reproduction was desired and this is effected accordingly

A name, which occurs unworthily enough toward the close, should be withdrawn were it found possible its presence may be pardoned, as serving at least to mark more dates than one

LONDON February, 1863

## SOME ACCOUNT OF THE GREEK CHRISTIAN POETS

THE Greek language was a strong intellectual life, stronger than any similar one which has lived in the breath of "articulately speaking men," and survived it No other language has lived so long and died so hard,—pang by pang, each with a dolphin colour—yielding reluctantly to that doom of death and silence which must come at last to the speaker and the speech Wonderful it is to look back fathoms down the great Past, thousands of

years away—where whole generations lie unmade to dust—where the sounding of their trumpets, and the rushing of their scythed chariots, and that great shout which brought down the birds stone dead from beside the sun, are more silent than the dog breathing at our feet, or the fly's paces on our window-pane, and yet, from the heart of which silence to feel words rise up like a smoke—words of men, even words of women, uttered at first, perhaps, in "excellent low voices," but audible and distinct to our times, through "the dreadful pother" of life and death, the hissing of the steam-engine and the cracking of the cerement! It is wonderful to look back and listen Blind Homer spoke this Greek after blind Demodocus, with a quenchless light about his brows, which he felt through his blindness Pindar rolled his chariots in it, prolonging the clamour of the games Sappho's heart beat through it, and heaved up the world's Æschylus strained it to the stature of his high thoughts Plato crowned it with his divine peradventures Aristophanes made it drunk with the wine of his fantastic merriment The latter Platonists wove their souls away in it out of sight of other souls The first Christians heard in it God's new revelation, and confessed their Christ in it from the suppliant's knee, and presently from the bishop's throne To all times, and their transitions, the language lent itself Through the long summer of above two thousand years, from the grasshopper Homer sang of, to that grasshopper of Manuel Phile, which might indeed have been "a burden," we can in nowise mistake the chirping of the bloodless, deathless, wondrous creature It chirps on in Greek still At the close of that long summer, though Greece lay withered to her root, her academic groves and philosophic gardens all leafless and bare, still from the

depth of the desolation rose up the voice—

O cuckoo, shall I call thee bird,  
Or but a wandering voice?

which did not grow hoarse, like other cuckoos, but sang not unsweetly, if more faintly than before. Strangely vital was this Greek language—

Some straggling spirits were behind, to be Laid out with most thrift on its memory

It seemed as if nature could not part with so lovely a tune, as if she felt it ringing on still in her head—or as if she hummed it to herself, as the watchman used to do, with “night wandering round” him, when he watched wearily on the palace roof of the doomed house of Atreus

But, although it is impossible to touch with a thought the last estate of Greek poetical literature without the wonder occurring of its being still Greek, still poetry,—though we are startled by the phenomenon of life-like sounds coming up from the ashes of a mighty people—at the aspect of an Alcestis returned from the dead *veiled* but identical,—we are forced to admit, after the first pause of admiration, that a change has passed upon the great thing we recognise, a change proportionate to the greatness, and involving a caducity. Therefore, in adventuring some imperfect account of the Greek ecclesiastical poets, it is right to premise it with the full and frank admission, that they are not accomplished poets,—that they do not, in fact, reach with their highest lifted hand, the lowest foot of those whom the world has honoured as Greek poets, but who have honoured the world more by their poetry. The instrument of the Greek tongue was, at the Christian era, an antique instrument, somewhat worn, somewhat stiff in the playing, somewhat deficient in notes which it had once, somewhat feeble and uncertain in such as it retained. The subtlety of the ancient music the variety of its cadences, the intersections of sweetness in the rise and fall of melodies, rounded and contained in the unity

of its harmony, are as utterly lost to this later period as the digamma was to an earlier one. We must not seek for them, we shall not find them, their place knows them no more. Not only was there a lack in the instrument,—there was also a deficiency in the players. Thrown aside, after the old flute-story, by a goddess, it was taken up by a mortal hand—by the hand of men gifted and noble in their generation, but belonging to it intellectually even by their gifts and their nobleness. Another immortal, a true genius, might, nay, would, have asserted himself, and wrung a poem of almost the ancient force from the infirm instrument. It is easy to fancy, and to wish that it had been so—that some martyr or bishop, when bishops were martyrs, and the earth was still warm with the Sacrificial blood, had been called to the utterance of his soul's devotion with the emphasis of a great poet's power. No one, however, was so called. Of all the names which shall presently be reckoned, and of which it is the object of this sketch to give some account, beseeching its readers to hold several in honourable remembrance not one can be crowned with a steady hand as a true complete poet's name. Such a crown is a sacred dignity, and as it should not be touched idly it must not be used here. A born Warwick could find, here, no head for a crown.

Yet we shall reckon names “for remembrance,” and speak of things not ignoble—of meek heroic Christians, and heavenward faces washed serene by tears—strong knees bending humbly for the very strength's sake—bright intellects burning often to the winds in fantastic shapes, but oftener still with an honest inward heat, vehement on heart and brain—most eloquent fallible lips that convince us less than they persuade—a divine loquacity of human falsities—poetical souls, that are not souls of poets! Surely not ignoble things! And the reader will perceive at once that the writer's heart is not laid beneath the wheels of



a cumbrous ecclesiastical antiquity—that its intent is to love what is lovable, to honour what is honourable, and to kiss both through the dust of centuries, but by no means to recognise a *hierarchy*, whether in the church or in literature

If, indeed, an opinion on the former relation might be regarded here, it would be well to suggest that to these "Fathers," as we call them filially, with heads turned away, we owe more reverence for the grey-ness of their beards than theologic gratitude for the outstretching of their hands. Devoted and disinterested as many among them were, they, themselves, were at most times evidently and consciously surer of their *love*, in a theologic sense, than of their knowledge in any. It is no place for a reference to religious controversy, and if it were, we are about to consider them simply as poets, without trenching on the very wide ground of their prose works and ecclesiastical opinions. Still one passing remark may be admissible, since the fact is so remarkable—how any body of Christian men can profess to derive their opinions from "the opinions of the Fathers," when *all* bodies might do so equally. These fatherly opinions are, in truth, multiform, and multitudinous as the fatherly "sublime grey hairs." There is not only a father apiece for every child, but, not to speak it unfilially, a piece of every father for every child. Justin Martyr would, of himself, set up a wilderness of sects, besides "something over" for the future ramifications of each several one. What then should be done with our "Fathers"? Leave them to perish by the time-Ganges, as old men innocent and decrepit, and worthy of no use or honour? Surely not. We may learn of them, if God will let us, *love*, and love is much—we may learn devotedness of them and warm our hearts by theirs, and thus, although we rather distrust them as commentators, and utterly refuse them the reverence of our souls, in the capacity of theologic oracles

Their place in literature, which we have to do with to-day, may be found, perhaps, by a like moderation. That place is not, it has been admitted, of the highest, and that it is not of the lowest the proof will presently be attempted. There is a mid-air kingdom of the birds called *Nephelococcygia*, of which Aristophanes tells us something, and we might stand there a moment so as to measure the local adaptitude, putting up the Promethean umbrella to hide us from the "Gods" if it were not for the "men and columns" lower down. But as it is, the very suggestion, if persisted in, would sink all the ecclesiastical antiquity it is desirable to find favour for, to all eternity, in the estimation of the kindest reader. No! the mid-air kingdom of the birds will not serve the wished-for purpose even illustratively, and by grace of the nightingale. "May the sweet saints pardon us" for wronging them by an approach to such a sense, which, if attained and determined, would have consigned them so certainly to what St Augustine called—when *he* was moderate too—"mitissima damnatio," a very mild species of damnation.

It would be, in fact, a rank injustice to the beauty we are here to recognise, to place these writers in the rank of mediocrities, supposing the harsh sense. They may be called mediocrities as poets among poets, but not so as no poets at all. Some of them may sing before gods and men, and in front of any column, from Trajan's to that projected one in Trafalgar Square, to which is promised the miraculous distinction of making the National Gallery sink lower than we see it now. They may, as a body, sing exultingly, holding the relation of column to gallery, in front of the whole "corpus" of Latin ecclesiastical poetry, and claim the world's ear and the poet's palm. That the modern Latin poets have been more read by scholars, and are better known by reputation to the general reader, is unhappily true but the truth

involves no good reason why it should be so, nor much marvel that it is so. Besides the greater accessibility of Latin literature, the vicissitude of life is extended to posthumous fame, and Time, who is Justice to the poet, is sometimes too busy in pulverising bones to give the due weight to memories. The modern Latin poets, "elegant,"—which is the critic's word to spend upon them,—elegant as they are occasionally, polished and accurate as they are comparatively, stand cold and lifeless, with statue-eyes near these good, fervid, faulty Greeks of ours—and we do not care to look again. Our Greeks do in their degree, claim their ancestral advantage, not the mere advantage of language,—nay, least the advantage of language—a comparative elegance and accuracy of expression being ceded to the Latins—but that higher distinction inherent in brain and breast, of vivid thought and quick sensibility. What if we swamp for a moment the Tertullians and Prudentiuses, and touch by a permitted anachronism, with one hand, VIDA, with the other, GREGORY NAZIANZEN, what then? What though the Italian poet be smooth as the Italian Canova—working like him out of stone—smooth and cold, disdaining to ruffle his dactyls with the beating of his pulses—what then? Would we change for him our sensitive Gregory, with all his defects in the glorious "*scientia metrica*"? We would not—perhaps we should not, even if those defects were not attributable, as Mr Boyd, in the preface to his work on the Fathers, most justly intimates to the changes incident to a declining language.

It is, too, as religious poets, that we are called upon to estimate these neglected Greeks—as religious poets, of whom the universal church and the world's literature would gladly embrace more names than can be counted to either. For it is strange that, although Wilhelm Meister's uplooking and downlooking aspects, the reverence to things above and things below, the religious all-clasp-

ing spirit, be, and must be, in degree and measure, the grand necessity of every true poet's soul,—of religious poets strictly so called, the earth is very bare. Religious "parcel-poets" we have, indeed, more than enough; writers of hymns, translators of scripture into prose, or of prose generally into rhymes, of whose heart-devotion a higher faculty were worthy. Also there have been poets not a few singing as if earth were still Eden, and poets, many singing as if in the first hour of exile, when the echo of the Curse was louder than the whisper of the Promise. But the right "genius of Christianity" has done little up to this moment, even for Chateaubriand. We want the touch of Christ's hand upon our literature, a, it touched other dead things—we want the sense of the saturation of Christ's blood upon the souls of our poets, that it may cry *through* them in answer to the ceaseless wail of the Sphinx of our humanity expounding agony into renovation. Something of this has been perceived in art when its glory was at the fullest. Something of a yearning after this may be seen among the Greek Christian poets, something which would have been *much* with a stronger faculty. It will not harm us in any case as lovers of literature and honest judges, if we breathe away, or peradventure *besom* away, the thick dust which lies upon their heavy folios, and *besom* away, or peradventure *breathe* away the inward intellectual dust, which must be confessed to lie thickly, too, upon the heavy poems and make our way softly and meekly into the heart of such hidden beauties (hidden and scattered) as our good luck, or good patience, or, to speak more reverently, the intrinsic goodness of the Fathers of Christian Poetry, shall permit us to discover. May gentle readers favour the endeavour, with "gentle airs," if any readers not too proud to sleep, were it only for Homer's sake, nor too passionate, at their worst displeasure, to do worse than growl in their sleeves,



CLEMENS ALEXANDRINUS, to whom we owe whatever gratitude is due for our fragmentary Ezekiel, was originally an Athenian philosopher, afterwards a converted Christian, a Presbyter of the Church at Alexandria, and preceptor of the famous Origen. Clemens flourished at the close of the second century. As a prose writer—and we have no prose writings of his, except such as were produced subsequently to his conversion—he is learned and various. His "Pedagogue" is a wanderer, to universal intents and purposes, and his "Tapestry," if the "Stromata" may be called so, is embroidered in all cross-stitches of philosophy, with not much scruple as to the shading of colours. In the midst of all is something, ycleped a dithyrambic ode, addressed to the Saviour, composite of fantastic epithets in the mode of the old litanies, and almost as bald of merit as the Jew-Greek drama, though Clemens himself (worthier in worthier places) be the poet. Here is the opening, which is less fanciful than what follows it —

Curb for wild horses,  
Wing for bird-courses  
Never yet flown!  
Helm, safe for weak ones,  
Shepherd, bespeak once,  
The young lambs thine own  
Rouse up the youth,  
Shepherd and feeder,  
So let them bless thee,  
Praise and confess thee,—  
Pure words on pure mouth,—  
Christ, the child-leader!  
O, the saints' Lord!  
All-dominant word!  
Holding, by Christdom,  
God's highest wisdom!  
Column in place  
When sorrows seize us—  
Endless in grace  
Unto man's race,  
Saving one, Jesus!  
Pastor and ploughman,  
Helm, curb, together,—  
Pinion that now can  
(Heavenly of feather)  
Raise and release us!  
Fisher who catcheth  
Those whom he watcheth  
It goes on, but we need not do so  
"By the pricking of our thumbs," we

know that the reader has had enough of it

Passing rapidly into the fourth century, we would offer our earliest homage to Gregory Nazianzen, "That name must ever be to us a friend," when the two APOLINARIUS cross our path and intercept the "all hail" Apolinarius the grammarian, formerly of Alexandria, held the office of presbyter in the church of Laodiceæ, and his son Apolinarius, an accomplished rhetorician, that of *reader*, an ancient ecclesiastical office, in the same church. This younger Apolinarius was a man of indomitable energies and most practical inferences, and when the edict of Julian forbade to the Christians the study of Grecian letters, he, assisted perhaps by his father's hope and hand, stood strong in the gap not in the attitude of supplication, not with the gesture of consolation, but in power and sufficiency to fill up the void and baffle the tyrant. Both father and son were in the work, by some testimony, the younger Apolinarius standing out, by all, as the chief worker and only one in any extensive sense. "Does Julian deny us Homer?" said the brave man in his armed soul—"I am Homer!" and straightway he turned the whole Biblical history, down to Saul's accession into Homeric hexameters,—dividing the work, so as to clench the identity of first and second Homers into twenty-four books, each superscribed by a letter of the alphabet, and the whole acceptable, according to the expression of Sozomen, *ἀντὶ τῆς Ὀμήρου ποιήσεως*, in the place of Homer's poetry. "Does Julian deny us Euripides?" said Apolinarius again—"I am Euripides!" and up he sprang,—as good an Euripides (who can doubt it?) as he ever was a Homer. "Does Julian forbid us Menander?"—Pindar?—Plato?—I am Menander!—I am Pindar!—I am Plato!" And comedies, lyrics, philosophics flowed fast at the word, and the gospels and epistles adapted themselves naturally to the rules of Socratic disputation. A brave man,

after the manner of "most delicate monsters" It is not intended to crush this forbearing class with folios, nor even with a folio, only to set down briefly in their sight what shall appear to the writer the characteristics of each poet, and to illustrate the opinion by the translation of a few detached passages or, in certain possible cases, of short entire poems And so much has been premised, simply that too much be not expected

It has the look of an incongruity, to begin an account of the Greek Christian poets with a Jew, and EZEKIEL is a Jew in his very name, and a "poet of the Jews" by profession Moreover he is wrapt in such a mystery of chronology that nobody can be quite sure of his not having lived before the Christian era—and one whole whisper establishes him as a unit of the famous seventy or seventy-two, under Ptolemy Philadelphus Let us waive the chronology in favour of the mystery He is brought out into light by Clemens Alexandrinus, and being associated with Greek poets, and a writer himself of Greek verses, we may receive him in virtue of the *τοσοτοσοτοσοτοσοτιγξ*, with little fear, in his case, of implying an injustice in that middle bird-locality of Nephelococcygia The reader must beware of confounding him with the prophet, and the circumstance of the latter's inspiration is sufficiently distinguishing Our Greek Ezekiel is, indeed, whatever his chronology may be, no *vates* in the ancient sense A Greek tragedy (and some fragments of a tragedy are all that we hold of him), by a Jew, and on a Jewish subject, "The Exodus from Egypt," may startle the most serene of us into curiosity—with which curiosity begins and ends the only strong feeling we can bring to bear upon the work, since, if the execution of it is somewhat curious too, there is a gentle collateral dulness which effectually secures us from feverish excitement Moses prologues after the worst manner of Euripides (worse than

the worse), compendiously relating his adventures among the bulrushes and in Pharaoh's household, concluded by his slaying an Egyptian, *because nobody was looking* So saith the poet Then follows an interview between the Israelite and Zipporah, and her companions, wherein he puts to her certain geographical questions, and she (as far as we can make out through fragmentary cracks) rather *brusquely* proposes their mutual marriage on which subject he does not venture an opinion, but we find him next confiding his dreams in a family fashion to her father who considers them satisfactory Here occurs a broad crack down the tragedy—and we are suddenly called to the revelation from the bush by an extraordinarily ordinary dialogue, between Deity and Moses It is a surprising specimen of the kind of composition adverted to some lines ago as the translation of Scripture into prose, and the sublime simplicity of the scriptural narrative being thus done (away) into Greek for a certain time, the following reciprocation—to which our old moralities can scarcely do more, or less, than furnish a parallel—prays for an English—exposure The Divine Being is supposed to address Moses —

But what is this thou holdest in thine hand?—

Let thy reply be sudden

Moses

'Tis my rod—I chasten with it quadrupeds and men  
*Voice from the Bush* Cast it upon the ground—and straight recoil,  
For it shall be, to move thy wonderment,  
A terrible serpent

Moses

It is cast But Thou, Be gracious to me, Lord How terrible! How monstrous! Oh, be pitiful to me! I shudder to behold it, my limbs shake

The reader is already consoled for the destiny which mutilated the tragedy, without requiring the last words of the analysis Happily characteristic of the "meekest of men," is Moses's naive admission of the uses of his rod—to beat men and animals withal—of course "when nobody is looking"

CLEMENS ALEXANDRINUS, to whom we owe whatever gratitude is due for our fragmentary Ezekiel was originally an Athenian philosopher, afterwards a converted Christian, a Presbyter of the Church at Alexandria, and preceptor of the famous Origen. Clemens flourished at the close of the second century. As a prose writer—and we have no prose writings of his, except such as were produced subsequently to his conversion—he is learned and various. His “*Pedagogue*” is a wanderer to universal intents and purposes, and his “*Tapestry*,” if the “*Stromata*” may be called so, is embroidered in all cross-stitches of philosophy, with not much scruple as to the shading of colours. In the midst of all is something, ycleped a dithyrambic ode, addressed to the Saviour composite of fantastic epithets in the mode of the old litanies, and almost as bald of merit as the Jew-Greek drama, though Clemens himself (worthier in worthier places) be the poet. Here is the opening, which is less fanciful than what follows it—

Curb for wild horses,  
Wing for bird-courses  
Never yet flown!  
Helm, safe for weak ones,  
Shepherd, bespeak once,  
The young lambs thine own  
Rouse up the youth,  
Shepherd and feeder,  
So let them bless thee,  
Praise and confess thee,—  
Pure words on pure mouth,—  
Christ, the child-leader!  
O, the saints' Lord!  
All-dominant word!  
Holding, by Christdom,  
God's highest wisdom!  
Column in place  
When sorrows seize us—  
Endless in grace  
Unto man's race,  
Saving one, Jesus!  
Pastor and ploughman,  
Helm, curb, together,—  
Pinion that now can  
(Heavenly of feather)  
Raise and release us!  
Fisher who catcheth  
Those whom he watcheth

It goes on, but we need not do so  
“By the pricking of our thumbs,” we

know that the reader has had enough of it

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forsooth, was our Apollinarius of Laodiceæ, and literally a man of men—for, observe, says Sozomen, with a venerable innocence, at which the gravest may smile gravely,—as at a doublet worn awry at the Council of Nice,—that the old authors did each man his own work, whereas this Apollinarius did every man's work in addition to his own—and so admirably—intimates the ecclesiastical critic,—that if it were not for the common prejudice in favour of antiquity, no ancient could be missed in the all-comprehensive representativeness of the Laodicean writer. So excellent was his ability, to "out-brave the stars in several kinds of light," besides the Cæsar! Whether Julian, naturally mortified to witness this germination of illustrious heads under the very iron of his searing, vowed vengeance against the Hydra-spirit, by the sacred memory of the animation of his own beard, we do not exactly know. To embitter the wrong, Apollinarius sent him a treatise upon truth—a confutation of the pagan doctrine, apart from the scriptural argument,—the Emperor's notice of which is both worthy of his Cæsarship, and a good model-notice for all sorts of critical dignities. Ἀνέγνω ἔργων κατέργων, is the Greek of it, so that, turning from the letter to catch something of the point, we may write it down—"I have perused, I have mused, I have abused" which provoked as imperious a retort—"Thou mayest have perused, but thou hast not mused, for hadst thou mused, thou wouldst not have abused." Brave Laodicean!

Apollinarius's laudable double of Greek literature has perished, the reader will be concerned to hear, from the face of the earth, being, like other *Iusus*, or marvels, or monsters, brief of days. One only tragedy remains, with which the memory of Gregory Nazianzen has been right tragically affronted, and which Gregory,—*ἐκ τῆς ἀλόγησις*, as he said of Constantine,—would cast off with the scorn and anger befitting an Apollin-

arian heresy. For Apollinarius, besides being an epist, dramatist, lyricist, philosopher, and rhetorician, was, we are sorry to add, in the eternal bustle of his soul, a heretic,—possibly for the advantage of something additional to do. He not only intruded into the churches hymns which were not authorised, being his own composition—so that reverend brows grew dark to hear women with musical voices sing them softly to the turning of their distaff,—but he fell into the heresy of denying a human soul to the perfect MAN, and of leaving the Divinity in bare combination with the Adamic dust. No wonder that a head so beset with many thoughts and individualities should at last turn round!—that eyes rolling in fifty fine frenzies of twenty-five fine poets should at last turn blind!—that a determination to rival all gemuses should be followed by a disposition more baleful in its exercise, to understand "all mysteries"! Nothing can be plainer than the step after step, whereby, through excess of vain-glory and morbid mental activity, Apollinarius, the vice-poet of Greece, subsided into Apollinarius the chief heretic of Christendom.

To go back sighingly to the tragedy, where we shall have to sigh again—the only tragedy left to us of all the tragic works of Apollinarius (but we do not sigh for *that*!)—let no voice ever more attribute it to Gregory Nazianzen. How could Mr Alford do so, however hesitatingly, in his "Chapters," attaching to it, without the hesitation, a charge upon the writer, whether Gregory or another man, that *he*, whoever he was, had, of his own free will and choice, destroyed the old Greek originals out of which his tragedy was constructed, and left it a monument of their sacrifice as of the blood on his barbarian hand? The charge passes, not only before a breath, but before its own breath. The tragedy is, in fact, a specimen of *centosism*, which is the adaptation of the phraseology of one work to the construction of another, and we

have only to glance at it to perceive the Medæa of Euripides dislocated into the CHRISTUS PATIENS. Instead of the ancient opening—

Oh, would ship Argo had not sailed away  
To Colchos by the rough Symplegades!  
Nor ever had been felled in Pelion's  
grove

The pine, hewn for her side!

So she, my queen,  
Medæa, had not touched this fatal shore,  
Soul-struck by love of Jason!

Apolinarius opens it thus—

Oh, would the serpent had not glode along  
To Eden's garden land,—nor ever had  
The crafty dragon planted in that grove  
A slimy snare! So she, rib-born of man,  
The wretched misled mother of our race,  
Had dared not to dare on beyond worst  
daring,

Soul-struck by love of—apples!

"Let us alone for keeping our countenance"—and at any rate we are bound to ask gravely of Mr Alford, *is the Medæa destroyed?*—and if not did the author of the "Christus Patiens" destroy his originals? and if not, may we not say of Mr Alford's charge against that author, "Oh, would he had not made it!" So far from Apolinarius being guilty of destroying his originals, it was his reverence for them which struggled with the edict of the persecutor, and accomplished this dramatic adventure,—and this adventure, the only remaining specimen of his adventurousness, may help us to the secret of his wonderful fertility and omnirepresentativeness, which is probably this—that the great majority of his works, tragic, comic, lyric, and philosophic, consisted simply of *centos*. Yet we pray for justice to Apolinarius: we pray for honour to his motives and energies. Without pausing to inquire whether it had been better and wiser to let poetry and literature depart at once before the tyranny of the edict, than to drag them back by the hair into attitudes grotesquely ridiculous—better and wiser for the Greek Christian schools to let them forgo altogether the poems of their Euripides, than adapt to the meek sorrows of

the tender Virgin-mother, the bold, bad, cruel frenzy of Medæa, in such verses as these—

She howls out ancient oaths, invokes the faith

Of pledged right hands, and calls, for witness, God!

—we pray straightforwardly for justice and honour to the motives and energies of Apolinarius. "Oh, would that" many lived *now* as appreciative of the influences of poetry on our schools and country, as impatient of their contraction, as self-devoted in the great work of extending them! There remains of his poetical labours, besides the tragedy, a translation of David's Psalms into "heroic verse," which the writer of these remarks has not seen,—and of which those critics who desire to deal gently with Apolinarius seem to begin their indulgence by doubting the authenticity.

It is pleasant to turn shortly round, and find ourselves face to face not with the author of "Christus Patiens" but with one antagonistical both to his poetry and his heresy, GREGORY NAZIANZEN. A noble and tender man was this Gregory, and so tender, because so noble, a man to lose no cubit of his stature for being looked at steadfastly, or struck at reproachfully. "You may cast me down," he said, "from my bishop's throne, but you cannot banish me from before God's." And bishop as he was, his saintly crown stood higher than his tiara, and his loving martyr-smile, the crown of a nature more benign than his fortune, shone up toward both. Son of the bishop of Nazianzen, and holder of the diocese which was his birthplace, previous to his elevation to the level of the storm in the bishopric of Constantinople, little did he care for bishoprics or high places of any kind,—the desire of his soul being for solitude, quietude, and that silent religion, which should "rather be than seem." But his father's head bent whitely before him, even in the chamber of his brother's death,—and Basil, his beloved friend, the "half of his soul" pressed on him



with the weight of love, and Gregory, feeling their tears upon his cheeks, did not count his own but took up the priestly office. Poor Gregory! not merely as a priest, but as a man, he had a sighing life of it. His student days at Athens, where he and Basil read together poems and philosophies, and holier things, or talked low and *misogonomistically* of their fellow-student Julian's bearded boding smile, were his happiest days. He says of himself

As many stones

Were thrown at me, as other men had flowers

Nor was persecution the worst evil, for friend after friend, beloved after beloved, passed away from before his face and the voice which charmed them living, spoke brokenly beside their graves,—his funeral orations marked severally the wounds of his heart,—and his genius served, as genius often does, to lay an emphasis on his grief. The passage we shall venture to translate is rather a cry than a song—

Where are my winged words? Dissolved in air

Where is my flower of youth? All withered Where

My glory? Vanished Where the strength I knew

From comely limbs? Disease hath changed it too,

And bent them Where the riches and the lands?

GOD HATH THEM! Yea, and sinners' snatching hands

Have grudged the rest Where is my father, mother,

And where my blessed sister, my sweet brother?

Gone to the grave!—There did remain for me

Alone my fatherland, till destiny, Maligantly stirring a black tempest, drove

My foot from that last rest And now I rove

Estranged and desolate a foreign shore, And drag my mournful life and age all

hoar Throneless and cityless, and childless

save This father-care for children, which I have,

Living from day to day on wandering feet

Where shall I cast this body? What will greet

My sorrows with an end? What gentle ground

And hospitable grave will wrap me round?

Who last my dying eyelids stoop to close—

Some saint, the Saviour's friend? or one of those

Who do not know Him? The air interpose,

And scatter these words too

The return upon the first thought is highly pathetic, and there is a

restlessness of anguish about the whole passage, which consecrates it

with the cross of nature. His happy Athenian associations gave a colour,

unwashed out by tears, to his mind and works. Half apostolical he was,

and half scholastical, and while he mused, on his bishop's throne, upon

the mystic tree of twelve fruits, and the shining of the river of life, he

carried, as Milton did, with a gentle and not ungraceful distraction, both

hands full of green trailing branches from the banks of the Cephissus, nay,

from the very plane-tree which Socrates sat under with Phædrus,

when they two talked about beauty to the rising and falling of its leaves

As an orator, he was greater, all must feel if some do not think, than his

contemporaries, and the "golden mouth" might confess it meekly

Erasmus compares him to Isocrates, but the unlikeness is obvious

Gregory was not excellent at an artful blowing of the pipes. He spoke

grandly, as the wind does, in gusts; and, as in a mighty wind, which

combines unequal noises, the creaking of trees and rude swinging of doors

as well as the sublime sovereign rush along the valleys, we gather

the idea, from his eloquence, less of music than of power. Not that he

is cold as the wind is—the metaphor goes no further. Gregory cannot

be cold, even by disfavour of his antithetic points. He is various in

his oratory, full and rapid in allusion, briefly graphic in metaphor, equally

sufficient for indignation or pathos, and gifted peradventure with a keener

dagger of sarcasm than should hang in a saint's girdle. His orations

against Julian have all these characteristics, but they are not poetry and we must pass down lower, and quite over his beautiful letters, to Gregory the poet

He wrote *thirty thousand verses*, among which are several long poems, severally defective in a defect common but not necessary to short occasional poems, and lamentable anywhere, a want of unity and completeness. The excellences of his prose are transcribed, with whatever faintness in his poetry—the exaltation, the devotion, the sweetness, the pathos, even to the playing of satirical power about the graver meanings. But although noble thoughts break up the dulness of the groundwork,—although, with the instinct of greater poets, he bares his heart in his poetry, and the heart is worth baring still monotony of construction without unity of intention is the most wearisome of monotonies, and, except in the case of a few short poems, we find it everywhere in Gregory. The lack of variety is extended to the cadences, and the pauses fall stiffly "*come corpo morto cade*" Melodious lines we have often harmonious passages scarcely ever—the music turning heavily on its own axle, as inadequate to living evolution. The poem on his own life ("*De Vita sua*") is, in many places, interesting and affecting, yet faulty with all these faults. The poem on Celibacy, which state is commended by Gregory as becometh a bishop has occasionally graphic touches, but is dull enough generally to suit the fairest spinster's view of that melancholy subject. If Hercules could have read it, he must have rested in the middle—from which the reader is entreated to forbear the inference that the poem has not been read through by the writer of the present remarks, seeing that that writer marked the grand concluding moment with a white stone, and laid up the memory of it among the chief triumphs, to say nothing of the fortunate deliverances, *vita sua*. In Gregory's elegiac poems, our ears, at least, are better contented,

because the sequence of pentameter to hexameter necessarily excludes the various cadence which they yearn for under other circumstances. His anacreontics are sometimes nobly written, with a certain brave recklessness, as if the thoughts despised the measure—and we select from this class a specimen of his poetry, both because three of his hymns have already appeared in the "*Athenæum*" and because the anacreontic in question includes to a remarkable extent, the various qualities we have attributed to Gregory not omitting that play of satirical humour with which he delights to ripple the abundant flow of his thoughts. The writer, though also a translator, feels less misgiving than usual in offering to the reader, in such English as is possible, this spirited and beautiful poem

#### SOUL AND BODY

What wilt thou possess or be ?  
O my soul, I ask of thee  
What of great, or what of small,  
Counted precious therewithal ?  
Be it only rare, and want it,  
I am ready, soul, to grant it  
Wilt thou choose to have and hold  
Lydian Gyges' charm of old,  
So to rule us with a ring,  
Turning round the jewelled thing,  
Hidden by its face concealed,  
And revealed by its revealed ?  
Or preferrest Midas' fate—  
He who died in golden state,  
All things being changed to gold ?  
Of a golden hunger dying,  
Through a surfeit of "would I"-ing !  
Wilt have jewels brightly cold,  
Or may fertile acres please ?  
Or the sheep of many a fold,  
Camels, oxen, for the wold ?  
Nay ! I will not give thee these !  
These to take thou hast not will,  
These to give I have not skill,  
Since I cast earth's cares abroad,  
That day when I turned to God  
Wouldst a throne, a crown sublime,  
Bubble blown upon the time ?  
So thou mayest sit to-morrow  
Looking downward in meek sorrow,  
Some one walking by thee scorning  
Who adored thee yester morning,  
Some malign one ? Wilt be bound  
Fast in marriage (joy unsound !)  
And be turned round and round

As the time turns ? Wilt thou catch it,  
That sweet sickness ? and to match it  
Have babies by the hearth, bewildering ?  
And if I tell thee the best children  
Are none—what answer ?

Wilt thou thunder  
Thy rhetorics, move the people under ?  
Covetest to sell the laws  
With no justice in thy cause,  
And bear on, or else be borne,  
Before tribunals worthy scorn ?  
Wilt thou shake a javelin rather  
Breathing war ? or wilt thou gather  
Garlands from the wrestler's ring ?  
Or kill beasts for glorying ?  
Covetest the city's shout,  
And to be in brass struck out ?  
Cravest thou that shade of dreaming,  
Passing air of shifting seeming,  
Rushing of a printless arrow,  
Clapping echo of a hand ?  
What to those who understand  
Are to-day's enjoyments narrow  
Which to-morrow go again,  
Which are shared with evil men,  
And of which no man in his dying  
Taketht ought for softer lying ?  
What then wouldst thou, if thy mood  
Choose not these ? what wilt thou be,  
O my soul—a deity ?  
A God before the face of God,  
Standing glorious in His glories,  
Choral in His angels' chorus ?

Go ! upon thy wing arise,  
Plumed by quick energies,  
Mount in circles up the skies  
And I will bless thy winged passion,  
Help with words thine exaltation,  
And, like a bird of rapid feather,  
Outlaunch thee, Soul, upon the ether

But thou, O fleshly nature, say,  
Thou with odours from the clay,  
Since thy presence I must have  
As a lady with a slave,  
What wouldst thou possess or be,  
That thy breath may stay with thee ?  
Nay ! I owe thee nought beside,  
Though thine hands be open wide  
Would a table suit thy wishes,  
Fragrant with sweet oils and dishes  
Wrought to subtle niceness ? where  
Stringed music strokes the air,  
And blithe hand-clappings, and the  
smooth  
Fine postures of the tender youth  
And virgins wheeling through the dance  
With an unveiled countenance,—  
Joys for drinkers, who love shame,  
And the maddening wine-cup's flame  
Wilt thou such, howe'er decried ?  
Take them,—and a rope beside !

Nay ! this boon I give instead  
Unto friend insatiated,—  
May some rocky house receive thee,  
Self roofed, to conceal thee chiefly,  
Or if labour there must lurk,  
Be it by a short day's work !  
And for garment, camel's hair,  
As the righteous clothed were,  
Clothe thee ! or the bestial skin  
Adam's bareness hid within,—  
Or some green thing from the way,  
Leaf of herb, or branch of vine,  
Swelling, purpling as it may,  
Fearless to be drunk for wine !  
Spread a table there beneath thee,  
Which a sweetness shall upbreathe thee,  
And which the dearest earth is giving,  
Simple present to all living !  
When that we have placed thee near it,  
We will feed thee with glad spirit  
Wilt thou eat ? soft, take the bread,  
Oaten cake, if that bested,  
Salt will season all aright,  
And thine own good appetite,  
Which we measure not, nor fetter  
'Tis an uncooked condiment,  
Famine's self the only better  
Wilt thou drink ? why, here doth bubble  
Water from a cup unspent,  
Followed by no tipsy trouble,  
Pleasure sacred from the grape !  
Wilt thou have it in some shape  
More like luxury ? we are  
No grudgers of wine-vinegar !  
But if all will not suffice thee,  
And thou covetest to draw  
In that pitcher with a flaw,  
Brimful pleasures heaven denies thee !  
Go, and seek out, by that sign,  
Other help than this of mine !  
For me, I have not leisure so  
To warm thee, sweet, my household foe,  
Until, like a serpent frozen,  
New-maddened with the heat, thou  
loosen

Thy rescued fang within mine heart !

Wilt have measureless delights  
Of gold-roofed palaces, and sights  
From pictured or from sculptured art,  
With motion near their life, and splendour  
Of bas-relief, with tracery tender,  
And varied and contrasted hues ?  
Wilt thou have, as nobles use,  
Broidered robes to flow about thee ?  
Jewelled fingers ? Need we doubt thee ?  
Gauds for which the wise will flout thee ?  
I most, who, of all beauty, know  
It must be inward, to be so !

And thus I speak to mortals low,  
Living for the hour, and o'er  
Its shadow, seeing nothing more :  
But for those of nobler bearing,

Who live more worthily of wearing  
 A portion of the heavenly nature—  
 To low estate of clayey creature,  
 See, I bring the beggar's meed,  
 Nutriment beyond the need!  
 O, beholder of the Lord,  
 Prove on me the flaming sword!  
 Be mine husbandman, to nourish  
 Holy plants, that words may flourish  
 Of which mine enemy would spoil me,  
 Using pleasurehood to foil me!  
 Lead me closer to the tree  
 Of all life's eternity,  
 Which, as I have pondered, is  
 The knowledge of God's great-esses  
 Light of One, and shine of Three,  
 Unto Whom all things that be  
 Flow and tend!

In such a guise,  
 Whoever on the earth is wise  
 Will speak unto himself and who  
 Such inner converse would eschew,—  
 We say perforce of that poor wight,  
 "He lived in vain!" and if *aright*,  
 It is not the worst word we might

AMPHILOCHIUS, bishop of Iconium, was beloved and much appreciated by Gregory, and often mentioned in his writings. Few of the works of Amphilocheus are extant, and of these only one is a poem. It is a didactic epistle to Seleucus, "On the Right Direction of his Studies and Life" and has been attributed to Gregory Nazianzen by some writers upon very inadequate evidence,—that adduced (the similar phraseology which conveys, in this poem and a poem of Gregory's, the catalogue of canonical scriptures), being as easily explained by the imitation of one poet, as by the identity of two. They differ, moreover, upon ground more important than phraseology. Amphilocheus appearing to reject, or at least to receive doubtfully, Jude's epistle and the Second of Peter. And there is a marsh force in the whole poem, which does not remind us of our Nazianzen, while it becomes, in the course of dissuading Seleucus from the amusements of the amphitheatre, graphic and effective. We hear, through the description, the grinding of the tigers' teeth, the sympathy of the people with the tigers showing still more savage

They sit unknowing of these agonies,  
 Spectators at a show. When a man flies  
 From a beast's jaw, they groan, as if at  
 least  
 They missed the ravenous pleasure, like  
 the beast,  
 And sat there vainly. When, in the  
 next spring,  
 The victim is attained, and, uttering  
 The deep roar or quick shriek between  
 the fangs,  
 Beats on the dust the passion of his pangs,  
 All pity dieth in that glaring look,  
 They clap to see the blood run like a  
 brook,  
 They stare with hungry eyes, which tears  
 should fill,  
 And cheer the beasts on with their soul's  
 good will,  
 And wish more victims to their maw,  
 and urge  
 And lash their fury, as they shared the  
 surge,  
 Gnashing their teeth, like beasts, on flesh  
 of men

There is an appalling reality in this picture. The epistle consists of 333 lines, which we mention specifically because the poet takes advantage of the circumstance to illustrate or enforce an important theological doctrine —

Three hundred lines, three decads,  
 monads three,  
 Comprise my poem. *Love the Trinity*

It would be almost a pain, and quite a regret, to pass from this fourth century without speaking a word which belongs to it—a word which rises to our lips a word worthy of honour—HELIODORUS. Though a bishop and an imaginative writer, his "Æthiopica" has no claim on our attention, either by right of Christianity or poetry, and yet we may be pardoned on our part for love's sake, and on account of the false position into which by negligence of readers or insufficiency of translators his beautiful romance has fallen, if we praise it heartily and faithfully even here. Our tears praised it long ago. Our recollection does so now and its own pathetic eloquence and picturesque descriptiveness are ripe for any praise. It has besides, a vivid Arabian Night charm, almost as charming as

Scheherazade herself, suggestive of an Arabian Night story drawn out "in many a winding bout," and not merely on the ground of extemporaneous loving and methodical (must we say it?) *lying*. In good sooth—no, not in good sooth, but in evil leasing—every hero and heroine of them all, from Abou Hassan to "the divine Chariclæa," does he most vehemently and abundantly by gift of nature and choice of author, whether bishop or sultana. "It is," as Pepys observes philosophically of the comparative destruction of gin-shops and churches in the Great Fire of London, "pretty to observe" how they all he. And although the dearest of story-tellers, our own Chaucer has told us that "some leasing is, of which there cometh none advantage to no wight," even that species is used by them magnanimously in its turn, for the bare glory's sake and without caring for the "advantage." With equal liberality, but more truth, we write down the bishop of Tricca's romance *charming* and wish the charm of it (however we may be out of place in naming him among poets) upon any poet who has not yet felt it, and whose eyes, giving honour, may wander over these Remarks. The poor bishop thought as well of his book as we do, perhaps better, for when commanded, under ecclesiastical censure, to burn it or give up his bishopric, he gave up the bishopric. And who blames Heliodorus? He thought well of his romance, he was angry with those who did not, he was weak with the love of it. Let whosoever blames, speak low. Romance-writers are not educated for martyrs, and the exacted martyrdom was very very hard. Think of that English bishop who burnt his hand by an act of volition—only his hand, and which was sure to be burnt afterwards, and how he was praised for it! Heliodorus had to do with a dearer thing—handwriting, not hands. Authors will pardon him, if bishops do not.

NONNUS of Panopolis, the poet of the "Dionysiaca," a work of some twenty-two thousand verses, on some twenty-two thousand subjects shaken together, flourished, as people say of many a dry-rooted soul, at the commencement of the fifth century. He was converted from paganism, but we are sorry to make the melancholy addition, that he was never converted from the "Dionysiaca." The only Christian poem we owe to him—a paraphrase in hexameters, of the apostle John's gospel—does all that a bald verbosity and an obscure tautology can do or undo, to quench the divinity of that divine narrative. The two well-known words, bearing on their brief vibration the whole passion of a world saved through pain from pain, are thus *translated*—

They answered Him  
"Come and behold" Then Jesus Him-  
self groaned,  
*Dropping strange tears from eyes unused  
to weep*

"Unused to weep!" Was it so of the Man of Sorrows? Oh, obtuse poet! We had translated the opening passage of the Paraphrase, and laid it by for transcription, but are repelled. Enough is said. Nonnus was never converted from the "Dionysiaca."

SYNESIUS of Cyrene learnt Plato's philosophy so well of Hypatia of Alexandria at the commencement of the fifth century, or rather before, that, to the obvious honour of that fair and learned teacher, he never, as bishop of Ptolemais, could attain to unlearning it. He did not wish to be bishop of Ptolemais, he had divers objections to the throne and the domination. He loved his dogs, he loved his wife, he loved Hypatia and Plato as well as he loved truth, and he loved beyond all things, under the womanly instruction of the former, to have his own way. He was a poet, too, the chief poet, we do not hesitate to record our opinion,—the chief, for true and natural gifts, of all our

Greek Christian poets, and it was his choice to pray lyrically between the dew and the cloud rather than preach dogmatically between the doxies. If Gregory shrank from the episcopal office through a meek self-distrust and a yearning for solitude, Synesius repulsed the invitation to it through an impatience of control over heart and life, and for the earnest joy's sake of thinking out his own thought in the hunting-grounds, with no deacon or disciple astuter than his dog to watch the thought in his face, and trace it backward or forward, as the case might be, into something more or less than what was orthodox. Therefore he, a man of many and wandering thoughts, refused the bishopric,—not weepingly, indeed, as Gregory did, nor feigning madness with another of the "nolentes episcopari" of that earnest period,—but with a sturdy enunciation of resolve, more likely to be effectual, of keeping his wife by his side as long as he lived, and of doubting as long as he pleased to doubt upon the resurrection of the body. But Synesius was a man of genius, and of all such true energies as are taken for granted in the name; and the very sullenness of his "nay" being expressive to grave judges of the faithfulness of his "yea and amen," he was considered too noble a man not to be made a bishop of in his own despite, and on his own terms. The fact proves the latitude of discipline, and even of doctrine permitted to the churches of that age, and it does not appear that the church at Ptolemais suffered any wrong as its result, seeing that Synesius, recovering from the shock militant of his ordination, in the course of which his ecclesiastical friends had "laid hands upon him" in the roughest sense of the word, performed his new duties willingly, was no sporting bishop otherwise than as a "fisher of men"—sent his bow to the dogs, and his dogs to Jericho, that nearest Coventry to Ptolemais, silencing his "staunch hound's authentic voice" as soon

as ever any importance became attached to the authenticity of his own. And if, according to the bond, he retained his wife and his Platonisms, we may honour him by the inference, that he did so for conscience' sake still more than love's, since the love was inoperative in other matters. For spiritual fervour and exaltation, he has honour among men and angels, and however intent upon spiritualising away the most glorified material body from "the heaven of his invention," he held fast and earnestly, as anybody's clenched hand could a horn of the altar, the Homoeousion doctrine of the Christian heaven, and other chief doctrines emphasising the divine sacrifice. But this poet has a higher place among poets than this bishop among bishops, the highest, we must repeat our conviction, of all yet named or to be named by us as "Greek Christian poets." Little, indeed, of his poetry has reached us, but this little is great in a nobler sense than of quantity, and when of his odes, Anacreontic for the most part we cannot say praisefully that "they smell of Anacreon," it is because their fragrance is holier and more abiding, it is because the human soul burning in the censer effaces from our spiritual perceptions the attar of a thousand rose-trees whose roots are in Teos. These odes have, in fact, a wonderful rapture and ecstasy. And if we find in them the phraseology of Plato, or Plotinus, for he leant lovingly to the later Platonists,—nay, if we find in them oblique references to the outworn mythology of paganism even so have we beheld the mixed multitude of unconnected motes wheeling, rising in a great sunshine, as the sunshine were a motive energy,—and even so the burning, adoring poet spirit sweeps upward the motes of world-fancies (as if, being in the world, their tendency was Godward) upward in a strong stream of sunny light, while she rushes into the presence of "The Alone." We say the

*spirit* significantly in speaking of this poet's aspiration. His is an ecstasy of abstract intellect, of pure spirit, cold though impetuous, the heart does not beat in it, nor is the human voice heard, the poet is true to the heresy of the ecclesiastic, and there is no resurrection of the body. We shall attempt a translation of the ninth ode, closer if less graceful and polished than Mr Boyd's, helping our hand to courage by the persuasion that the genius of its poetry must look through the thickest blanket of our dark

Well-beloved and glory-laden,  
Born of Solyma's pure maiden,  
I would hymn Thee, blessed Warden,  
Driving from Thy Father's garden  
Blinking serpent's crafty lust,  
With his bruised head in the dust!  
Down Thou camest, low as earth,  
Bound to those of mortal birth,  
Down Thou camest, low as hell,  
Where shepherd-Death did tend and keep  
A thousand nations like to sheep,  
While weak with age old Hades fell  
Shivering through his dark to view Thee,  
And the Dog did backward yell  
With jaws all gory to let through Thee!  
So, redeeming from their pain  
Choirs of disembodied ones,  
Thou didst lead whom Thou didst gather,  
Upward in ascent again,  
With a great hymn to the Father,  
Upward to the pure white thrones!  
King, the daemon tribes of air  
Shuddered back to feel Thee there!  
And the holy stars stood breathless,  
Trembling in their chorus deathless,  
A low laughter filled ether—  
Harmony's most subtle sire  
From the seven strings of his lyre  
Stroked a measured music hither—  
Io pæan! victory!  
Smiled the star of morning—he  
Who smileth to foreshow the day!  
Smiled Hesperus the golden,  
Who smileth soft for Venus gay!  
While that horned glory holden  
Brimful from the fount of fire,  
The white moon, was leading higher  
In a gentle pastoral wise  
All the nightly deities!  
Yea, and Titan threw abroad  
The far shining of his hair  
'Neath Thy footsteps holy-fair,  
Owning Thee the Son of God,  
The Mind artificer of all,  
And his own fire's original!

And Thou upon Thy wing of will  
Mounting,—Thy God-foot uptill  
The neck of the blue firmament,—  
Soaring, didst alight content  
Where the spirit-spheres were singing,  
And the fount of good was springing,  
In the silent heaven!  
Where Time is not with his tide  
Ever running, never weary,  
Drawing earth-born things aside  
Against the rocks, nor yet are given  
The plagues death-bold that ride the dreary

Tost matter-depths Eternity  
Assumes the places which they yield!  
Not aged, howso'er she held  
Her crown from everlastingly—  
At once of youth, at once of eld,  
While in that mansion which is hers  
To God and gods she ministers!

How the poet rises in his "singing clothes" embroidered all over with the mythos and the philosophy! Yet his eye is to the Throne and we must not call him half a heathen by reason of a Platonic idiosyncrasy, seeing that the esoteric of the most suspicious turnings of his phraseology is "Glory to the true God." For another ode, Paris should be here to choose it—we are puzzled among the beautiful. Here is one with a thought in it from Gregory's prose, which belongs to Synesius by right of conquest—

O my deathless, O my blessed,  
Maid-born, glorious Son confessed,  
O my Christ of Solyma!  
I who earliest learnt to play  
This measure for Thee, fain would bring  
Its new sweet tune to cithern-string—  
Be propitious, O my King!  
Take this music which is mine  
Anthem'd from the songs divine!

We will sing Thee, deathless One,  
God Himself and God's great Son—  
Of sire of endless generations,  
Son of manifold creations!  
Nature mutually endued,  
Wisdom in infinitude!  
God, before the angels burning—  
Corpse, among the mortals mourning!  
What time Thou wast poured mild  
From an earthy vase defiled,  
Magi with fair arts besprent,  
At Thy new star's orient,  
Trembled inly, wondered wild,  
Questioned with their thoughts abroad—  
What then is the new-born child?  
Who the hidden God?

God, or corpse, or king?  
 Bring your gifts, oh hither bring  
 Myrrh for rite—for tribute, gold—  
 Frankincense for sacrifice!  
 God! Thine incense take and hold!  
 King! I bring thee gold of price!  
 Myrrh with tomb will harmonise!

For Thou, entombed, hast purified  
 Earthly ground and rolling tide,  
 And the path of dæmon nations,  
 And the free air's fluctuations,  
 And the depth below the deep!  
 Thou God, helper of the dead,  
 Low as Hades didst Thou tread!  
 Thou King, gracious aspect keep,  
 Take this music which is mine,  
 Anthem'd from the songs divine

EUDOCIA—in the twenty-first year  
 of the fifth century—wife of Theo-  
 dosius, and empress of the world,  
 thought good to extend her sceptre—

(Hac claritate gemina  
 O gloriosa femina!)

over Homer's poems, and cento-ise  
 them into an epic on the Saviour's  
 life. She was the third fair woman  
 accused of sacrificing the world for  
 an apple, having moved her husband  
 to wrath, by giving away his imper-  
 ial gift of a large one to her own  
 philosophic friend Paulinus, and  
 being unhappily more learned than  
 her two predecessors in the sin, in  
 the course of her exile to Jerusa-  
 lem, she took ghostly comfort, by  
 separating Homer's *εἰδωλον* from  
 his *φρένες*. There she sat among  
 the ruins of the holy city, addressing  
 herself most unholily, with whatever  
 good intentions and delicate fingers,  
 to pulling Homer's gold to pieces  
 bit by bit, even as the ladies of  
 France devoted what remained to  
 them of virtuous energy "pour  
 parfiler" under the benignant gaze  
 of Louis Quinze. She, too, who had  
 no right of the purple to literary in-  
 eritade—she, born no empress of  
 Rome, but daughter of Leontius  
 the Athenian, what had she to do  
 with Homer "parflant"? Was  
 it not enough for Homer that he  
 was turned once, like her own  
 cast imperial mantle, by Apollinarius  
 into a Jewish epic, but that he  
 must be unpicked again by Eudocia  
 for a Christian epic? The reader,

who has heard enough of centos  
 will not care to hear how she did it.  
 That she did it was too much,  
 and the deed recoiled. For mark  
 the poetical justice of her destiny,  
 let all readers mark it, and all  
 writers, especially female writers,  
 who may be half as learned, and  
 not half as fair,—that although  
 she wrote many poems, one "On  
 the Persian War," whose title and  
 merit are recorded, not one, except  
 this cento, has survived. The ob-  
 literative sponge, we hear of in  
 Æschylus, has washed out every  
 verse except this cento's "damned  
 spot." This remains. This is called  
 Eudocia! this stands for the daugh-  
 ter of Leontius, and this only in  
 the world! O fair mischief! she  
 is punished by her hand.

And yet, are we born critics any  
 more than she was born an empress,  
 that we should not have a heart?  
 and is our heart stone, that it should  
 not wax soft within us while the  
 vision is stirred "between our eye-  
 lids and our eyes," of this beautiful  
 Athenais, baptized once by Christian  
 waters, and once by human tears  
 into Eudocia, the imperial mourner?  
 —this learned pupil of a learned  
 father, crowned once by her golden  
 hair, and once by her golden crown,  
 yet praised more for poetry and learn-  
 ing than for beauty and greatness by  
 such grave writers as Socrates and  
 Evagrius the ecclesiastical histo-  
 rians?—this world's empress, pale  
 with the purple of her palaces, an exile  
 even on the throne from her Athens  
 and soon twice an exile, from father's  
 grave and husband's bosom? We  
 relent before such a vision. And  
 what if, reluctantly, we declare  
 her innocent of the Homeric cento?  
 —what if we find her "a whipping  
 boy" to take the blame?—what  
 if we write down a certain Proba  
 "improba," and bid her bear it?  
 For Eudocia having been once a  
 mark to slander, may have been so  
 again, and Falconia Proba, having  
 committed centoism upon Virgil,  
 must have been capable of anything.  
 The Homeric cento has been actually



attributed to her by certain critics, with whom we would join in all earnestness our most sour voices, gladly, for Eudocia's sake who is closely dear to us, and malignly for Proba's, who was "improba" without our help. So shall we impute evil to only one woman, and she not an Athenian, while our worst wish, even to her, assumes this innoxious shape, that she had used a distaff rather than a stylus, though herself and the yet more "Sleeping Beauty" had owned one horseshoe between them! Amen to our wish! A busy distaff and a sound sleep to Proba!

And now, that golden-haired, golden-crowned daughter of Leontius, for whom neither the much learning nor the much sorrow drove Hesperus from her sovran eyes—let her pass on unblenched. Be it said of her, softly as she goes, by all gentle readers—"She is innocent, whether for centos or for apples!" She wrote only such Christian Greek poems as Christians and poets might rejoice to read, but which perished with her beauty, as being of one seed with it."

Midway in the sixth century we encounter PAUL SILENTIARIUS, called so in virtue of the office held by him in the court of Justinian, and chiefly esteemed for his descriptive poem on the Byzantine church of St Sophia, which, after the Arian conflagration, was rebuilt gorgeously by the emperor. This church was not dedicated to a female saint, according to the supposition of many persons but to the second person of the Trinity, the *αγία σοφία*—holy wisdom, while the poem being recited in the imperial presence, and the poet's gaze often forgetting to rise higher than the imperial smile, Paul Silentarius dwelt less on the divine dedication and the spiritual uses of the place, than on the glory of the dedicant and the beauty of the structure. We hesitate, moreover, to grant to his poem the praise which has been freely granted to it by more capable critics, of its power to realise

this beauty of structure to the eyes of the reader. It is highly elaborate and artistic, but the elaboration and art appear to us architectural far more than picturesque. There is no sequency, no congruity, no keeping, no light and shade. The description has reference to the working as well as to the work, to the materials as well as to the working. The eyes of the reader are suffered to approach the whole only in analysis, or rather in analysis analysed. Every part part by part, is recounted to him excellently well—is brought close till he may touch it with his eyelashes, but when he seeks for the general effect, it is in pieces—there is none of it. Byron shows him more in the passing words—

I have beheld Sophia's bright roofs swell  
Their glittering mass 'till the sun—

than Silentarius in all his poem. Yet the poem has abundant merit in diction and harmony, and, besides higher noblenesses, the pauses are modulated with an artfulness not commonly attained by these later Greeks, and the ear exults in an unaccustomed rhythmic pomp which the inward critical sense is inclined to murmur at, as an expletive verbosity.

Whoever looketh with a mortal eye  
To heaven's emblazoned forms, not  
steadfastly

With unreverted neck can bear to measure

That meadow-round of star-apparelled pleasure,

But drops his eyelids to the verdant hill,  
Yearning to see the river run at will,  
With flowers on each side,—and the ripening corn,

And grove thick set with trees, and flocks at morn

Leaping against the dews,—and ~~offers~~ twined,

And green vine-branches, trailingy inclined,—

And the blue calmness skimmed by dripping oar

Along the Golden Horn.

But if he bring  
His foot across this threshold, never more  
Would he withdraw it, fain, with wandering

most eyes, and ever-turning head, to stay,  
 Since all satiety is driven away  
 Beyond the noble structure Such a fane  
 Of blameless beauty hath our Cæsar raised  
 By God's perfective grace, and not in vain!  
 O emperor, these labours we have praised,  
 Draw down the glorious Christ's perpetual smile,  
 For thou, the high-peaked Ossa didst not pile  
 Upon Olympus' head, nor Pelion throw  
 Upon the neck of Ossa, opening so  
 The ether to the steps of mortals! no!  
 Having achieved a work more high than hope,  
 Thou didst not need these mountains as a slope  
 Whereby to scale the heaven! Wings take thee thither  
 From purest piety to highest ether

The following passage, from the same "Description," is hard to turn into English, through the accumulative riches of the epithets Greek words atone for their vainglorious redundancy by their beauty, but we cannot think so of these our own pebbles —

Who will unclothe me Homer's sounding lips,  
 And sing the marble mead that oversweeps  
 The mighty walls and pavements spread around  
 Of this tall temple, which the sun has crowned?  
 The hammer with its iron tooth was loosed  
 Into Carystus' summit green, and bruised  
 The Phrygian shoulder of the dædal stone,—  
 This marble, coloured after roses fused  
 In a white air, and that, with flowers thereon  
 Both purple and silver, shining tenderly!  
 And that which in the broad fair Nile sank low  
 The barges to their edge, the porphyry's glow  
 Sown thick with little stars! and thou mayst see  
 The green stone of Laconia glitter free!  
 And all the Carian hill's deep bosom brings,  
 Streaked bow-wise, with a livid white and red,—  
 And all the Lydian chasm keeps covered,  
 A hueless blossom with a ruddier one

Soft mingled! all, besides, the Libyan sun  
 Warms with his golden splendour, till he make  
 A golden yellow glory for his sake,  
 Along the roots of the Maurusian height!  
 And all the Celtic mountains give to sight  
 From crystal clefts black marbles dappled fair  
 With milky distillations here and there!  
 And all the onyx yields in metal shine  
 Of precious greenness!—all that land of thine,  
 Ætolia, hath on even plains engendered  
 But not on mountain tops,—a marble rendered  
 Here nigh to green, of tints which emeralds use,  
 Here with a sombre purple in the hues!  
 Some marbles are like new-dropt snow, and some  
 Alight with blackness!—Beauty's rays have come,  
 So congregate, beneath this holy dome!

And thus the poet takes us away from the church and dashes our senses and admirations down these marble quarries! Yet it is right for us to admit the miracle of a poem made out of stones! and when he spoke of unclosing Homer's lips on such a subject, he was probably thinking of Homer's ships, and meant to intimate that one catalogue was as good for him as another

JOHN GEOMETRA arose in no propitious orient probably with the seventh century, although the time of his "elevation" appears to be uncertain within a hundred years

He riseth slowly, as his sullen car  
 Had all the weights of sleep and death  
 - hung on it

Plato, refusing his divine fellowship to anyone who was not a geometrician or who was a poet, might have kissed our Johannes, who was not divine, upon both cheeks, in virtue of his other name and in vice of his verses. He was the author of certain hymns to the Virgin Mary, as accumulative of epithets and admirations as ten of her litanies, inclusive of a pious compliment, which, however geometrically exact in its proportions, sounds strangely

O health to thee! new living car of the sky,  
Afire on the wheels of four virtues at  
once!

O health to thee! Seat, than the cherubs  
more high,  
More pure than the seraphs, *more  
broad than the thrones!*

Towards the close of the last  
hymn, the exhausted poet empties  
back something of the ascription into  
his own lap, by a remarkable "*mihi  
quoque*"

O health to me, royal one! if there be-  
long

Any grace to my singing, that grace is  
from thee

O health to me, royal one! if in my song  
Thou hast pleasure, oh, thine is the  
grace of the glee!

We may mark the time of GEORGE  
PISIDA, about thirty years deep in  
the seventh century. He has been  
confounded with the rhetorical arch-  
bishop of Nicomedia, but held the  
office of scævophylax, only lower  
than the highest, in the metropolitan  
church of St Sophia, and was a poet,  
singing half in the church and half  
in the court, and considerably  
nearer to the feet of the Emperor  
Heraclius than can please us in any  
measure. Hoping all things, how-  
ever, in our poetical charity, we  
are willing to hope even this,—  
that the man whom Heraclius carried  
about with him as a singing-man  
when he went to fight the Persians,  
and who sang and recited accord-  
ingly, and provided notes of admiration  
for all the imperial notes of interro-  
gation, and gave his admiring poems  
the appropriate and suggestive name  
of *acroases*—auscultations, things in-  
tended to be heard,—might never-  
theless love Heraclius the fighting-  
man, not slave-wise or flatter-wise  
but man-wise or dog-wise, in good  
truth, and up to the brim of his  
praise, and so hoping, we do not  
dash the praise down as a libation  
to the infernal task-masters. Still  
it is an impotent conclusion to a  
free-hearted poet's musing on the  
"Six Days' Work," to wish God's  
creation under the sceptre of his  
particular friend! It looks as if

the particular friend had an ear  
like Dionysius, and the poet—ah,  
the poet!—a mark as of a cham  
upon his brow in the shadow of his  
court laurel

We shall not revive the question  
agitated among his contemporaries,  
whether Euripides or George Pisida  
wrote the best iambics, but that  
our George knew the secret of  
beauty, and that, having noble  
thoughts, he could utter them nobly,  
is clear, despite of Heraclius. That  
he is besides, unequal, often coldly  
perplexed when he means to be in-  
genious, only violent when he seeks  
to be inspired, that he premed-  
itates ecstasies, and is inclined to  
the attitudes of the orators, in  
brief, that he "not only" (and not  
seldom) "sleeps but *snores*"—are  
facts as true of him as the praise is  
His Hexaameron, to which we re-  
ferred as his chief work, is rather a  
meditation or rhythmical speech  
upon the finished creation, than a  
retrospection of the six days, and  
also there is more of Plato in it than  
of Moses. It has many fine things,  
and whole passages of no ordinary  
eloquence, though difficult to separ-  
ate and select

Whatever eyes seek God to view His  
Light,

As far as they behold Him close in night!  
Whoever searcheth with insatiate balls  
Th' abysmal glare, or gazeth on Heaven's  
walls

Against the fire-disc of the sun, the same  
According to the vision he may claim,  
Is dazzled from his sense. What soul of  
flame

Is called sufficient to view onward thus  
The way whereby the sun's light came  
to us?

O distant Presence in fixed motion!  
Known

To all men, and inscrutable to one  
Perceived — uncomprehended! unex-  
plained

To all the spirits, yet by each attained,  
Because its God-sight is Thy work! O  
Presence,

Whatever holy greatness of Thine essence  
Lie virtue-hidden, Thou hast given our  
eyes

The vision of Thy plastic energies—  
Not shown in angels only (those create

All fiery-hearted, in a mystic state  
Of bodiless body) but, if order be  
Of natures more sublime than they or we,  
In highest Heaven, or mediate ether, or  
This world now seen, or one that came  
before

Or one to come,—quick in Thy purpose,  
—*there!*

Working in fire and water, earth and  
air—

In every tuneful star, and tree, and  
bird—

In all the swimming, creeping life un-  
heard

In all green herbs, and chief of all, in  
MAN

There are other poems of inferior  
length, "On the Persian War," in  
three books or, alas, "auscultations,"  
—"The Herachad," again on the  
Persian war, and in two (of course)  
auscultations again, — "Against  
Severus," "On the Vanity of Life,"  
"The War of the Huns," and others  
From the "Vanity of Life," which  
has much beauty and force, we  
shall take a last specimen —

Some yearn to rule the state, to sit above,  
And touch the cares of hate as near as  
love,

Some their own reason for tribunal take,  
And for all thrones the humblest prayers  
they make,

Some love the orator's vainglorious art,—  
The wise love silence and the hush of  
heart,—

Some to ambition's spirit-curse are fain,  
That golden apple with a bloody stain,  
While some do battle in her face (more  
rife

Of noble ends) and conquer strife with  
strife

And while your groaning tables gladden  
these,

Satiety's quick chariot to disease,  
Hunger the wise man helps, to water,  
bread,

And light wings to the dreams about his  
head

The truth becomes presently ob-  
vious, that—

The sage o'er all the world his sceptre  
waves,

And earth is common ground to thrones  
and graves

JOHN DAMASCENUS, to whom we  
should not give by any private im-  
pulse of admiration the title of  
Chrysorrhoeas, accorded to him by  
his times, lived at Damascus, his

native city, early in the eighth cen-  
tury, holding an unsheathed sword  
of controversy until the point drew  
down the lightning. He retired  
before the affront rather than the  
injury, and in company with his  
beloved friend and fellow poet,  
Cosmas of Jerusalem (whose poetical  
remains the writer of these Remarks  
has vainly sought the sight of, and  
therefore can only as by hearsay,  
ascribe some value to them), hid the  
remnant of his life in the monastery  
of Saba, where Phocas of the twelfth  
century looked upon the tomb of  
either poet. John Damascenus wrote  
several acrostics on the chief festivals  
of the churches, which are not much  
better, although very much longer,  
than acrostics need be. When he  
writes out of his heart, without  
looking to the first letters of his  
verses—as, indeed, in his Anacreontic  
his eyes are too dim for iota hunting,  
—he is another man and almost a  
strong man, for the heart being  
sufficient to speak we want no  
Delphic oracle—"Pan is not dead"  
In our selection from the Anacreontic  
hymn, the tears seem to trickle  
audibly, we welcome them as a  
Castalia, or, rather, "as Siloa's  
brook," flowing by an oracle more  
divine than any Grecian one —

From my lips in their defilement,  
From my heart in its beguilement,  
From my tongue which speaks not fair,  
From my soul stained everywhere,  
O my Jesus, take my prayer!

Spurn me not for all it says,  
Not for words and not for ways,  
Not for shamelessness endured!  
Make me brave to speak my mood,  
O my Jesus, as I would!  
Or teach me, which I rather seek,  
What to do and what to speak

I have sinned more than she,  
Who learning where to meet with Thee,  
And bringing myrrh, the highest-  
priced,

Anointed bravely, from her knee,  
Thy blessed feet accordingly,

My God, my Lord, my Christ!  
As Thou saiest not "Depart,"

To that suppliant from her heart,  
Scorn me not, O Word, that art

The gentlest one of all words said!  
But give Thy feet to me instead,

That tenderly I may them kiss  
 And clasp them close, and never miss  
 With over-dropping tears, as free  
 And precious as that myrrh could be,  
 T' anoint them bravely from my knee!  
 Wash me with my tears: draw nigh me,  
 That their salt may purify me.  
 Thou remit my sins who knowest  
 All the sinning to the lowest—  
 Knowest all my wounds, and seest  
 All the stripes Thyself decreest;  
 Yea, but knowest all my faith,  
 Seest all my force to death,  
 Hearest all my wallings low,  
 That mine evil should be so!  
 Nothing hidden but appears  
 In Thy knowledge, O Divine,  
 O Creator, Saviour mine—  
 Not a drop of falling tears,  
 Not a breath of inward moan,  
 Not a heart-beat—which is gone!

After this deep pathos of Christianity, we dare not say a word; we dare not even praise it as poetry: our heart is stirred, and not "idly." The only sound which can fitly succeed the cry of the contrite soul is that of Divine condonation or of angelic rejoicing. Let us, who are sorrowful still, be silent too.

Although doubts, as broad as four hundred years, separate the earliest and latest period talked of as the age of SIMEON METAPHRASTES by those "vir illustriissimi" the classical critics, we may set him down, without much peril to himself or us, at the close of the tenth century, or very early in the eleventh. He is chiefly known for his "Lives of the Saints," which have been lifted up as a mark both for honour and dishonour; which Psellus hints at as a favourite literature of the angels, which Leo Allatius exalts as chafing the temper of the heretics, and respecting which we, in an exemplary serenity, shall straightway accede to one-half of the opinion of Bellarmine—that the work speaketh not as things actually happened, but as they might have happened—"non ut res gestæ fuerant, sed ut geri potuerant." Our half of this weighty opinion is the first clause—we demur upon "ut geri potuerant,"—and we need not go further than the former to win a light of commentary for

the term "metaphrases," applied to the saintly biographies in otherwise a doubtful sense, and worn obliquely upon the sleeve of the biographer Metaphrastes, in no doubtful token of his skill in metamorphosing things as they were into things as they might have been. And Simeon having received from Constantinople the honour of his birth within her walls, and returning to her the better honour of the distinctions and usefulness of his life,—so writeth Psellus, his encomiast, with a graceful turn of thought,—expired in an "odour of sanctity" befitting the biographer of all the saints,—breathing out from his breathless remains such an incense of celestial sweetness, that if it had not been for the maladroitness of certain unfragrant persons whose desecration of the next tomb acted instantly as a stopper, the whole earth might at this day be *metaphrased* to our nostrils, as steeped in an attar-gul of Eden or Edē!—we might be dwelling in a phoenix-nest at this day. Through the maladroitness, however, in question, there is lost to us every sweeter influence from the life and death of Simeon Metaphrastes than may result from the lives and deaths of his saints, and from other works of his, whether commentaries, orations, or poems; and we cannot add that the aroma from his writings bears any proportion in value to the fragrance from his sepulchre. Little of his poetry has reached us, and we are satisfied with the limit. There were three Simeons, who did precede our Simeon, as the world knoweth, and whose titles were Stylitæ or Columnarii, because it pleased them in their saintly volition to take the highest place and live out their natural lives supernaturally, each upon the top of a column. Peradventure the columns which our Simeon refused to live upon conspired against his poetry: peradventure it is on their account that we find ourselves between two alphabetic acrostics, written solemnly by his hand, and take up one

wherein every alternate line begins with a letter of the alphabet, its companion in the couplet being left to run behind it, out of livery and sometimes out of breath Will the public care to look upon such a curiosity? Will our verse-writers care to understand what harm may be done by a conspiracy of columns—gods and men quite on one side? And will candid readers care to confess at last, that there is an earnestness in the poem, acrostic as it is,—a leaning to beauty's side,—which is above the acrosticism? Let us try—

Ah, tears upon mine eyelids, sorrow on mine heart,

I bring Thee soul-repentance, Creator as Thou art!

Bounding joyous actions, deep as arrows go,

Pleasures self-revolving, issue into woe!

Creatures of our mortal, headlong rush to sin

I have seen them, of them—ah me,—I have been!

Duly pitying Spirits, from your spirit-frame,

Bring your cloud of weeping,—worthy of the same!

Else I would be bolder, if that light of Thine,

Jesus, quell the evil, let it on me shine!

Fail me truth, is living, less than death forlorn,

When the sinner readeth—"better be unborn?"

God, I raise toward Thee both eyes of my heart,

With a sharp cry—"Help me!"—while mine hopes depart

Help me! Death is bitter, all hearts comprehend,

But I fear beyond it—end beyond the end

Inwardly behold me, how my soul is black

Sympathise in gazing, do not spurn me back!

Knowing that Thy pleasure is not to destroy,

That Thou fain wouldst save me—this is all my joy

Lo, the lion, hunting spirits in their deep, (Stand beside me!) roareth—(help me!) nears to leap!

Mayst Thou help me, Master Thou art pure alone,

Thou alone art sinless, one Christ on a throne

Nightly deeds I loved them, hated day's instead,

Hence this soul-involving darkness on mine head

O Word, Who constrainest things estranged and curst,

If Thy hand can save me, that work were the first!

Pensive o'er my sinning, counting all its ways,

Terrors shake me, waiting adequate dismays

Quenchless glories many, hast Thou—many a rod—

Thou, too, hast Thy measures Can I bear Thee, God?

Rend away my counting from my soul's decline,

Show me of the portion of those saved of Thine!

Slow drops of my weeping to Thy mercy run

Let its rivers wash me, by that mercy won!

Tell me what is worthy, in our dreary now, As the future glory? (madness!) what, as Thou?

Union, oh, vouchsafe me to Thy fold beneath,

Lest the wolf across me gnash his gory teeth!

View me, judge me gently! spare me, Master bland,

Brightly lift Thine eyelids, kindly stretch Thine hand!

Winged and choral angels! 'twixt my spirit lone,

And all deathly visions, interpose your own!

Yea, my Soul, remember death and woe inwrought—

After-death affliction, wringing earth's to nought!

Zone me, Lord, with graces! Be foundations built

Underneath me, save me! as Thou know'st and wilt!

The omission of our X (in any case too sullen a letter to be employed in the service of an acrostic) has permitted us to write line for line with the Greek, and we are able to infer to the honour of the Greek poet that, although he did not live upon a column, he was not far below one, in the virtue of self-mortification. We are tempted to accord him some more gracious and serious justice, by breaking away a passage from his "Planctus Mariæ" the lament of Mary on embracing the Lord's

body, and giving a moment's insight into a remarkable composition, which, however deprived of its poetical right of measure, is, in fact, nearer to a poem, both in purpose and achievement, than any versified matter we have looked upon from this metaphrastic hand —

"O, uncovered corse, yet Word of the Living One! self-doomed to be uplifted on the cross for the drawing of all men unto Thee,—what member of Thine hath no wound? O my blessed brows, embraced by the thorn-wreath which is pricking at my heart! O beautiful and priestly One, Who hadst not where to lay Thine head and rest, and now wilt lay it only in the tomb, resting *there* sleeping, as Jacob said, a lion's sleep! O cheeks turned to the smiter! O lips, new hive for bees yet fresh from the sharpness of vinegar and bitterness of gall! O mouth, wherein was no guile, yet betrayed by the traitor's kiss! O hand, creative of man, yet nailed to the cross, and since, stretched out unto Hades, with help for the first transgressor! O feet, once walking on the deep to hallow the waters of nature! O me, my Son!

Where is Thy chorus of sick ones?—those whom Thou didst cure of their diseases, and bring back from the dead? Is none here, but only Nicodemus, to draw the nails from those hands and feet?—none here, but only Nicodemus, to lift Thee from the cross, heavily, heavily, and lay Thee in these mother arms, which bore Thee long ago, in Thy babyhood, and were glad *then*? These hands, which swaddled Thee then, let them bind Thy grave-clothes now. And yet,—O bitter funerals!—O Giver of life from the dead, liest Thou dead before mine eyes? Must I, who said 'hush' beside Thy cradle, wail this passion upon Thy grave? I, who washed Thee in Thy first bath, must I drop on Thee these hotter tears? I, who raised Thee high in my maternal arms,—but *then* Thou leapedst,—*then* Thou sprangdest up in Thy child-play!"

It is better to write so than to stand upon a column. And, although the passage does, both generally and specifically, in certain of its ideas, recall the antithetic eloquence of that Gregory Nazianzen before whom this Simeon must be dumb, we have touched his "oration," so called, nearer than our subject could permit us to do any of Gregory's, because the "Planctus" involves an imagined situation, is poetical in its design. Moreover, we must prepare to look downwards, the poets were descending from the gorgeous majesty of the hexameter and the severe simplicity of iambs, down through the mediate *versus politici*, a loose metre, adapted to the popular ear, to the lowest deep of a "measured prose,"—which has been likened, but which *we* will not liken, to the blank verse of our times. Presently, we may offer an example from Psellus of a prose acrostic—the reader being delighted with the prospect! "A whole silver threepence, mistress."

MICHAEL PSELLUS lived midway in the eleventh century, and appears to have been a man of much aspiration toward the higher places of the earth. A senator of no ordinary influence, preceptor of the Emperor Michael previous to that accession, he is supposed to have included in his instructions the advantages of sovereignty, and in his precepts the most subtle means of securing them. We were about to add, that his acquirements as a scholar were scarcely less imperial than those of his pupil as a prince, but the expression might have been inappropriate. There are cases not infrequent, not entirely opposite to the present case, and worthy always of all meditation by such intelligent men as affect extensive acquisition,—when acquirements are not ruled by the man, but rule him. Whatever originates from the mind cannot obstruct her individual faculty, nay, whatever she receives inwardly and marks her power over by creating out of it a *tertium quid*,

according to the law of the perpetual generation of spiritual verities, is not obstructive but impulsive to the evolution of faculty; but the erudition, whether it be erudition as the world showed it formerly, or miscellaneous literature, as the world shows it now, the accumulated acquirement of whatever character, which remains *extraneous* to the mind, is and must be in the same degree an obstruction and deformity. How many are there from Psellus to Bayle, bound hand and foot intellectually with the rolls of their own papyrus—men whose erudition has grown stronger than their souls! How many whom we would gladly see washed in the clean waters of a little ignorance, and take our own part in their refreshment! Not that knowledge is bad, but that wisdom is better; and that it is better and wiser in the sight of the angels of knowledge to think out one true thought with a thrush's song and a green light for all lexicon (or to think it without the light and without the song—because truth is beautiful, where they are not seen or heard)—than to mummy our benumbed souls with the circumvolutions of twenty thousand books. And so Michael Psellus was a learned man.

We have sought earnestly, yet in vain,—and the fact may account for our ill-humour,—a sight of certain iambs upon vices and virtues, and Tantalus and Sphinx, which are attributed to this writer, and cannot be in the moon after all:—earnestly, yet with no fairer encouragement to our desire than what befalls it from his *poems* "On the Councils," the first of which, and only the first, through the softness of our charities, we bring to confront the reader:—  
 Know the holy councils, King, to their utmost number,  
 Such as roused the impious ones from their world-wide slumber!  
 Seven in all those councils were: Nice the first containing,  
 When the godly master-soul Constantine was reigning,  
 What time at Byzantium, hallowed with the hyssop,

In heart and word, Metrophanes presided as archbishop!  
 It cut away Arius' tongue's maniacal delusion,  
 Which cut off from the Trinity the blessed Homocousion—  
 Blasphemed (O miserable man!) the maker of the creature,  
 And low beneath the Father cast the equal Filial nature.

The prose acrostic, contained in an office written by Psellus to the honour of Simeon, is elaborated on the words "I sing thee who didst write the metaphrases;" every sentence being insulated, and beginning with a charmed letter.

Say in a dance how we shall go,  
 Who never could a measure know?

why, thus—(and yet Psellus, who did *know* everything, wrote a synopsis of the metres!)—why, thus:—

"Inspire me, Word of God, with a rhythmic chant, for I am borne onward to praise Simeon Metaphrastes and Logothetes, as he is fitly called, the man worthy of admiration!

"Solemnly from the heavenly heights did the Blessed Ghost descend on thee, wise one, and finding thine heart pure, rested there, there verily in the body!"

Surely we need not write any more. But Michael Psellus was a very learned man.

JOHN OF EUCHAITA (or Euchania, or Theodoropolis,—the three names do appear through the twilight to belong to one city) was a bishop, probably contemporary with Psellus—is only a poet now: we turn to see the voice which speaks to us. It is a voice with a soul in it, clear and sweet and living; and we who have walked long in the desert, leap up to its sound as to the dim flowing of a stream, and would take a deep breath by its side both for the weariness which is gone and the repose which is coming. But it is a rarer thing than a stream in the desert: it is a voice in the desert—the only voice of a city. The city may have three names, as we have said, or the three names may more fitly appertain to three cities—scholars knit their brows and



wax doubtful as they talk, but a city denuded of its multitudes it surely is, ruined even of its ruins it surely is no exhalation arises from its tombs, the foxes have lost their way to it, the bittern's cry is as dumb as the vanished population—only the Voice remains John Mauropus, of Euchaita, Euchania, Theodoropolis—one living man among many dead, as the Arabian tale goes of the city of enchantment—one speechful voice among the silent, sole survivor of the breath which maketh words, effluence of the soul replacing the bittern's cry—speak to us! And thou shalt be to us as a poet, we will salute thee by that high name For have we not stood face to face with Michael Psellus and him of the metaphrases? Surely as a poet may we salute *thee*!

His poetry has, as if in contrast to the scenery of circumstances in which we find it or to the fatality of circumstances in which it has *not* been found (and even Mr Clarke in his learned work upon Sacred Literature, which is, however incommunicative generally upon sacred poetry, appears unconscious of his being and his bishopric)—his poetry has a character singularly vital, fresh, and serene. There is nothing in it of the rapture of inspiration, little of the operative-ness of art—nothing of imagination in a high sense, or of ear-service in any—he is not, he says, of those—Who rain hard with redundancies of words,

And thunder and lighten out of eloquence  
His Greek being opposed to that of the Silentarii and the Pisidæ by a peculiar simplicity and ease of collocation which the reader feels lightly in a moment, the thoughts move through its transparency with a certain calm nobleness and sweet living earnestness, with holy upturned eyes and human tears beneath the lids, till the reader feels lovingly too. We startle him from his reverie with an octave note on a favourite literary fashion of the living London, drawn from the voice of the lost city, discovering by that sound the first serial

illustrator of pictures by poems, in the person of our Johannes Here is a specimen from an annual of Euchaita, or Euchania, or Theodoropolis—we may say "annual" although the pictures were certainly not in a book, but were probably ornaments of the beautiful temple in the midst of the city, concerning which there is a tradition. Here is a specimen selected for love's sake, because it "illustrates" a portrait of Gregory Nazianzen—

What meditates thy thoughtful gaze, my father?  
To tell me some new truth? Thou canst not so!  
For all that mortal hands are weak to gather  
Thy blessed books unfolded long ago

These are striking verses, upon the Blessed among women, weeping—

O Lady of the passion, dost thou weep?  
What help can we then through our tears survey,  
If such as thou a cause for wailing keep?  
What help, what hope, for us, sweet Lady, say?  
"Good man, it doth befit thine heart to lay

More courage next it, having seen me so  
All other hearts find other balm to day—  
*The whole world's consolation is my woe!*"

Would any hear what can be said of a Transfiguration before Raffael's—

Tremble, spectator, at the vision won  
thee!  
Stand afar off, look downward from the height,  
Lest Christ too nearly seen show'd lighten  
on thee,  
And from thy fleshly eyeballs strike  
the sight,  
As Paul fell ruined by that glory white!  
Lo, the disciples prostrate, each apart,  
Each impotent to bear the lamping light!  
And all that Moses and Elias ~~might~~,  
The darkness caught the grace upon her heart  
And gave them strength for! *Thou*, if  
evermore  
A God-voice pierce thy dark,—rejoice,  
adore!

Our poet was as unwilling a bishop as the most sturdy of the "volentes", and there are poems written both in

depreciation of, and in retrospective regret for, the ordaining dignity, marked by noble and holy beauties which we are unwilling to pass without extraction. Still we are constrained for space, and must come at last to his chief individual characteristic—to the gentle humanities which, strange to say, preponderate in the solitary voice—to the familiar smiles and sighs which go up and down in it to our ear. We will take the poem "To his old house," and see how the house survives by his good help, when the sun shines no more on the golden statue of Constantine —

O be not angry with me, gentle house  
That I have left thee empty and deserted !

Since thou thyself that evil didst arouse,  
In being to thy masters so false-hearted,

In loving none of those who did possess  
thee,

In ministr'ing to no one to an end  
In no one's service caring to confess thee,  
But loving still the change of friend  
for friend,

And sending the last, plague wise, to  
the door !

And so, or ere thou canst betray and  
leave me,

I, a wise lord, dismiss thee, servitor,  
And antedate the wrong thou mayst  
achieve me

Against my will, by what my will allows,  
Yet not without some sorrow, gentle  
house !

For oh, beloved house, what time I render

My last look back on thee I grow more  
tender !

Pleasant possession, hearth for father's  
age,

Dear gift of buried hands, sole heritage !  
My blood is stirred, and love, that learnt  
its play

From all sweet customs, moves mine  
heart thy way !

For thou wast all my nurse and helpful  
creature,

For thou wast all my tutor and my  
teacher,

In thee through lengthening toils I  
struggled deep,

In thee I watched all night without its  
sleep,

In thee I worked the wearier daytime  
out,

Exalting truth, or trying by a doubt

And oh, my father's roof ! the memory  
leaves

Such pangs as break mine heart, beloved  
eaves,

But God's word conquers all !

He is forced to a strange land,  
reverting with this benediction to the  
"dearest house" —

Farewell, farewell, mine own familiar one,  
Estranged for evermore from this day's  
sun,

Fare-thee-well so ! Farewell, O second  
mother,

O nurse and help,—remains there not  
another !

My bringer-up to some sublimer measure  
Of holy childhood and perfected pleasure !

Now other spirits must thou tend and  
teach,

And minister thy quiet unto each,  
For reasoning uses, if they love such use,

But nevermore to me ! God keep thee,  
house,

God keep thee, faithful corner where I  
drew

So calm a breath of life ! And God keep  
you

Kind neighbours ! Though I leave you  
by His grace,

Let no grief bring a shadow to your face,  
Because whate'er He willeth to be done

His will makes easy, makes the distant—  
one,

And soon brings all embraced before His  
throne !

We pass PHILIP SOLITARIUS who lived at the close of this eleventh century, even as we have passed one or two besides of his fellow-poets because they having hidden themselves beyond the reach of our eyes and the endeavour of our hands and we being careful to speak by knowledge rather than by testimony nothing remains to us but this same silent passing—thus regretful one, as our care to do better must testify—albeit our fancy will not, by any means, account them, with all their advantages of absence, "the best part of the solemnity"

Early in the twelfth century we are called to the recognition of THEODORE PRODROMUS, theologian philosopher, and poet. His poems are unequal, consisting principally of a

series of tetrastichs (Greek epigrams for lack of point, French epigrams for lack of poetry) upon the Old and New Testaments and the Life of Chrysostom,—all nearly as bare of the rags of literary merit as might be expected from the design, and three didactic poems upon Love, Providence, and against Bareus the heretic, into which the poet has cast the recollected life of his soul. The soul deports herself as a soul should, with a vivacity and energy which work outward and upward into eloquence. The sentiments are lofty the expression free, there is an instinct to a middle and an end. Music we miss, even to the elementary melody the poet thinks his thoughts, and speaks them, not indeed what all poets, so called, do esteem a necessary effort, and indeed what we should thank him for doing, but he *sings* them in nowise, and they are not of that divine order which are crowned by right of their divinity with an inseparable aureole of sweet sound. His poem upon Love—*φιλία* says the Greek word, but friendship does not answer to it,—is a dialogue between the personification and a stranger. It opens thus dramatically, the stranger speaking—

Love! Lady diademed with honour,  
whence  
And whither goest thou? Thy look  
presents  
Tears to the lid, thy mien is vexed and low,  
Thy locks fall wildly from thy drooping  
brow,  
Thy blushes are all pale, thy garb is fit  
For mourning in, and shoon and zone are  
loose!  
So changed thou art to sadness every  
whit,  
And all that pomp and purple thou didst  
use,  
That seemly sweet, that new rose on  
the mouth,  
Thou fair-smoothed tresses, and that  
graceful zone,  
Bright sandals, and the rest thou haddest  
on,  
Are all departed, gone to nought to-  
gether!  
And now thou walkest mournful in the  
train  
Of mourning women!—where and whence,  
again?

Love From earth to God my Father  
Stranger Dost thou say  
That earth of Love is desolated?  
Love Yea!  
It so much scorned me  
Stranger Scorned?  
Love And cast me out  
From its door  
Stranger From its door?  
Love As if without  
I had my lot to die!

Love consents to give her confidence to the wondering stranger, whereupon, as they sit in the shadow of a tall pine, she tells a Platonic story of all the good she had done in heaven before the stars and the angels, and the throned Triad, and of all her subsequent sufferings on the melancholy and ungrateful earth. The poem, which includes much beauty, ends with a quaint sweetness in the troth-plighting of the stranger and the lady. Mayst thou have been faithful to that oath, O Theodore Prodromus! but thou didst swear "too much to be believed—so much."

The poems "On Providence" and "Against Bareus" exceed the "Love" perhaps in power and eloquence to the full measure of the degree in which they fall short of the interest of the latter's design. Whereupon we dedicate the following selection from the "Providence" to Mr Carlyle's "gigmen" and all "respectable persons"—

Ah me! what tears mine eyes are welling  
forth,  
To witness in this synagogue of earth  
Wise men speak wisely while the scoffers  
sing,  
And rich men folly, for much honouring!  
Melitus stifles—Socrates decrees  
Our further knowledge! Death to So-  
crates,  
And long life to Melitus!

Chiefdom of evil, gold! blind child of  
clay,  
Gnawing with fixed tooth earth's heart  
away!  
Go! perish from us! objurcation vain  
To soulless nature, powerless to contain  
One ill unthrust upon it! Rather perish  
That turpitude of crowds, by which they  
cherish

Bad men for their good fortune, or condemn,  
Because of evil fortune, virtuous men !

Oh, for a trumpet-mouth ! an iron tongue  
Sufficient for all speech ! foundations  
hung

High on Parnassus' top to bear my feet !  
So from that watch-tower, words which  
shall be meet,

I may out-thunder to the nations near  
me—

"Ye worshippers of gold, poor rich  
men, hear me !

Where do ye wander ?—for what object  
stand ?

That gold is earth's ye carry in your  
hand,

And floweth earthward ! bad men have  
its curse

The most profusely ! would yourselves  
be worse

So to be richer ?—better in your purse ?  
Your royal purple—'twas a dog that  
found it !

Your pearl of price—a sickened oyster  
owned it !

Your glittering gems are pebbles, dust-  
astray,

Your palace pomp was wrought of wood  
and clay,

Smoothed rock and moulded plinth !  
earth's clay, earth's wood,

Earth's common-hearted stones ! Is  
this your mood,

To honour *earth*, to worship *earth*, nor  
blush ? "

What dost thou murmur, savage mouth ?  
Hush, hush,

Thy wrath is vainly breathed The  
depth to tread

Of God's deep judgments, was not Paul's  
he said

The "savage mouth" speaks in  
power, with whatever harshness  
and we are tempted to contrast with  
this vehement utterance another  
short poem by the same poet, a little  
quant withal, but light, soft, almost  
tuneful,—as written for a "Book of  
Beauty," and that not of Eucharista !  
The subject is "LIFE"

Oh, take me, thou mortal,—thy LIFE for  
thy praiser !

Thou hast met, found and seized me,  
and know'st what my ways are

Nor leave me for slackness, nor yeld me  
for pleasure,

Nor look up too saintly, nor muse beyond  
measure !

There's the veil from my head—see the  
worst of my mourning !

There are wheels to my feet—have a  
dread of their turning !

There are wings round my waist—I may  
flatter and flee thee !

There are yokes on my hands—fear the  
chains I decree thee !

Hold *me* ! hold a shadow, the winds as  
they quiver,

Hold *me* ! hold a dream, smoke, a track  
on the river

Oh, take me, thou mortal,—thy Life for  
thy praiser,

Thou hast met not and seized not, nor  
know'st what my ways are !

Nay, frown not, and shrink not, nor call  
me an aspen,

There's the veil from my head ! I have  
dropped from thy clasping !

A fall-back within it I soon may afford  
thee,

There are wheels to my feet—I may roll  
back toward thee !

There are wings round my waist—I may  
flee back and clip thee !

There are yokes on my hands—I may  
soon cease to whip thee !

Take courage ! I rather would hearten  
than hip thee !

JOHN TZETZA divides the twelfth  
century with his name, which is not  
a great one. In addition to an iambic  
fragment upon education, he has  
written indefatigably in the metre  
*politicus*, what must be read, if read  
at all, with a corresponding energy,  
—thirteen "chiliads," of "varæ  
historiæ" so called after Ælian's,—  
Ælian's without the "honey-tongue"  
—very various histories indeed about  
crocodiles and flies and Plato's philo-  
sophy and Cleopatra's nails, and Sam-  
son and Phidias and the resurrection  
from the dead, and the Calydonian  
boar—"everything under the sun"  
being, in fact their imperfect epitome.  
The omission is simply POETRY !  
there is no apparent consciousness  
of her entity in the mind of this  
versifier, no aspiration towards her  
presence, not so much as a sigh upon  
her absence. We do not indeed  
become aware, in the whole course  
of this laborious work of much  
unfolding of faculty—take it lower  
than the poetical, of nothing much  
beyond an occasional dry, sly, some-  
what boorish humour, which being

good humour besides, would not be a bad thing were its traces only more extended. But the general level of the work is a dull talkativeness, a prosy adversity, who is no "Daughter of Jove," and a slumberousness without a dream. We adjudge to our reader the instructive history of the Phoenix.

A phoenix is a single bird and synchronous with nature,  
The peacock cannot equal him in beauty or in stature!  
In radiance he outshines the gold, the world in wonder yieldeth,  
His nest he fixeth in the trees, and all of spices buildeth  
And when he dies, a little worm, from out his body twining,  
Doth generate him back again whene'er the sun is shining  
He lives in Egypt, and he dies in Ethiopia only, as  
Asserts Philostratus, who wrote the Life of Apollonius  
And (as the wise Egyptian scribe, the holy scribe Chæremon,  
Hath entered on these Institutes, all centre their esteem on)  
Seven thousand years and six of age, this phoenix of the story  
Expireth from the fair Nile side, whereby he had his glory!

In the early part of the fourteenth century, MANUEL PHILE, pricked emulously to the heart by the successful labours of Tzetza, embraced into identity with himself the remaining half of Ælian, and developed in his poetical treatise "On the Properties of Animals," to which Isachmus Camerarius provided a conclusion—the "Natural History" of that industrious and amusing Greek-Roman. The Natural History is translated into verse, but by no means glorified, and yet the poet of animals, Phile, has carried away far more of the Ælian honey clinging to the edges of his *patera* than the poet of the *Chiliads* did ever wot of. What we find in him is not beauty, what we hear in him is not music, but there is an open feeling for the beautiful which stirs at a word, and we have a scarcely confessed contentment in hearkening to those twice-told stories of birds and beasts and fishes, mea-

sured out to us in the low monotony of his chanting voice. Our selections shall say nothing of the live grasshopper, called, with the first breath of this paper, an emblem of the vital Greek tongue, because the space left to us closes within our sight, and the science of the age does not thirst to receive, through our hands, the history of grasshoppers, according to Ælian or Phile either. Everybody knows what Phile tells us here, that grasshoppers live upon morning dew, and cannot sing when it is dry. Everybody knows that the lady grasshopper sings not at all. And if the moral, drawn by Phile from this latter fact, of the advantage of silence in the female sex generally, be true and important, it is also too obvious to exact our enforcement of it. Therefore we pass by the grasshopper, and the nightingale too, for all her fantastic song, an hasten to introduce to European naturalists a Philhellenic species of *heron*, which has escaped the researches of Cuvier, and the peculiarities of which may account to the philosophic reader for that instinct of the "wisdom of our forefathers" which established an English university in approximation with the Fens. It is earnestly to be hoped that the nice ear in question for the Attic dialect may still be preserved among the herons of Cambridge-shire—

A Grecian island nourisheth to bless  
A race of herons in all nobleness  
If some barbarian bark approach the shore,  
They hate, they flee,—no eagle can out-soar!  
But if by chance an Attic voice be wist,  
They grow softhearted straight, philhellenist,  
Press on in earnest flocks along the strand,  
And stretch their wings out to the comer's hand  
Perhaps he hears them with a gentle mind,—  
They love his love, though foreign to their kind!  
For so the island giveth winged teachers,  
In true love lessons, to all wingless creatures  
He has written, besides, "A

Dialogue between Mind and Phile," and other poems; and we cannot part without taking from him a more solemn tone, which may sound as an "Amen" to the good we have said of him. The following address to the Holy Spirit is concentrated in expression:—

O living Spirit, O falling of God-dew,  
O Grace which dost console us and renew,  
O vital light, O breath of angelhood,  
O generous ministration of things good,  
Creator of the visible, and best  
Upholder of the great unmanifest  
Power infinitely wise, new boon sublime  
Of science and of art, constraining might,  
In whom I breathe, live, speak, rejoice,  
and write,—  
Be with us in all places, for all time!

"And now," saith the patientest reader of all, "you have done. Now we have watched out the whole night of the world with you, by no better light than these poetical rushlights, and the wicks fail, and the clock of the universal hour is near upon the stroke of the seventeenth century, and you have surely done!" Surely *not*, we answer; for we see a hand which the reader sees not, which beckons us over to Crete, and clasps within its shadowy fingers a roll of hymns Anacreontical, written by MAXIMUS MARGUNIUS: and not for the last of our readers would we lose this last of the Greeks, owing him salutation. Yet the hymns have, for the true Anacreontic fragrance, a musty odour, and we have scant praise for them in our nostrils. Their inspiration is from Gregory Nazianzen, whose "Soul and Body" are renewed in them by a double species of transmigration; and although we kiss the feet of Gregory's high excellences, we cannot admit any one of them to be a safe conductor of poetical inspiration. And, in union with Margunius's plagiaristic tendencies, there is a wearisome lengthiness, harder to bear. He will knit you to the whole length of a "Honi soit qui mal y pense," till you fall asleep to the humming of the stitches what time you should be reading the "moral." We ourselves once

dropped into a "distraction," as the French say,—for nothing could be more different from what the English say, than our serene state of self-abnegation,—at the beginning of a house-building by this Maximus Margunius: when, reading on some hundred lines with our bare bodily eyes, and our soul starting up on a sudden to demand a measure of the progress, behold, he was building it still, with a trowel in the same hand: it was not forwarder by a brick. The swallows had time to hatch two nestfuls in a chimney while he finished the chimney-pot! Nevertheless he has moments of earnestness, and they leave beauties in their trace. Let us listen to this extract from his fifth hymn:—

Take me as a hermit lone  
With a desert life and moan;  
Only Thou anear to mete  
Slow or quick my pulse's beat;  
Only Thou, the night to chase  
With the sunlight in Thy face!  
Pleasure to the eyes may come  
From a glory seen afar,  
But if life centre gloom  
Scattered by no little star,  
Then, how feeble, God, we are!  
Nay, whatever bird there be,  
(Ether by his flying stirred,)  
He, in this thing, must be free—  
And I, Saviour, am Thy bird,  
Pricking with an open beak  
At the words that Thou dost speak!  
Leave a breath upon my wings,  
That above these nether things  
I may rise to where Thou art,  
I may flutter next Thine heart!  
For if a light within me burn,  
It must be darkness in an urn,  
Unless, within its crystalline,  
That unbeginning light of Thine  
Shine!—oh, Saviour, let it shine!

He is the last of our Greeks. The light from Troy city, with which all Greek glory began, "threw three-times six," said Æschylus, that man with a soul,—beacon after beacon, into the heart of Greece. "Three-times six," too, threw the light from Greece, when her own heart-light had gone out like Troy's, onward along the ridges of time. Three times six—but what faint beacons are the last!—sometimes only a red

brand, sometimes only a small trembling flame, sometimes only a white glimmer as of ashes breathed on by the wind, faint beacons and far! How far! We have watched them along the cloudy tops of the great centuries, through the ages dark but for them—and now stand looking with eyes of farewell upon the last pale sign on the last mist-bound hill. But it is the sixteenth century. Beyond the ashes of the hill a red light is gathering, above

the falling of the dews a great sun is rising there is a rushing of life and song upward—let it still be UPWARD! Shakespeare is in the world! And the Genius of English Poetry she who only of all the earth is worthy (Goethe's spirit may hear us say so, and smile), stooping, with a royal gesture, to kiss the dead lips of the Genius of Greece, stands up her successor in the universe, by virtue of that chrism, and in right of her own crown

## THE BOOK OF THE POETS

THE VOICE of the turtle is heard in the land. The green book of the earth is open, and the four winds are turning the leaves while Nature, chief secretary to the creative Word, sits busy at her inditing of many a lovely poem,—her "Flower and the Leaf" on this side, her "Cuckoo and the Nightingale" on that, her "Paradise of Dainty Devices" in and out among the valleys her "Polyolbion" away across the hills, her "Britannia's Pastorals" on the home meadows, her sonnets of tufted primroses, her lyrical outgoings of May blossoming, her epical and didactic solemnities of light and shadow, and many an illustrative picture to garnish the universal annual. What book shall we open side by side with Nature's? First, the book of God "The Book of the Poets" may well come next—even this book, if it deserve indeed the nobility of its name.

But this book, which is not Campbell's "Selection from the British Poets," nor Southey's, nor different from either by being better, resembles many others of the nobly named, whether princes or hereditary legislators, in bearing a name too noble for its deserts. This book, consisting of short extracts from the books of the poets, beginning with Chaucer, ending with Beattie, and missing sundry by the way—we call it indefinitely "A book of the poets,"

and leave it thankful. The extracts from Chaucer are topsy-turvy—one from the "Canterbury Tales" prologue thrown in between two from the Knight's Tale, while Gower may blame "his fortune"—

(And some men hold opinion  
That it is constellation,)

for the dry specimen crumbled off from his manmountainism. Of Lydgate there is scarcely a page, of Occleve, Hawes, and Skelton—the two last especially interesting in poetical history,—of Sackville, and the whole generation of dramatists, not a word. "The table is not full" and the ringing on it of Phillips's "Splendid Shilling" will not bribe us to endurance. What! place for Pomfret's platitudes, and no place for Shakespeare's divine sonnets? and no place for Jonson's and Fletcher's lyrics? Do lyrics and sonnets perish out of place whenever their poets make tragedies too, quenched by the entity of tragedy? We suggest that Shakespeare has nearly as much claim to place in any possible book of the poets (though also a book of the poetasters) as ever can have John Hughes, who "as a poet, is chiefly known," saith the critical editor, "by his tragedy of the 'Siege of Damascus'." Let this book therefore accept our boon, and remain a book of the poets, thankfully if not

gloriously,—while we, on our own side, may be thankful too, that in the present days of the millennium of Jeremy Bentham—a more literally golden age than the laureates of Saturnus dreamed withal,—any memory of the poets should linger with the booksellers and “come up this way” with the spring. The thing is good, in that it is at all. Send a little child into a garden, and he will be sure to bring you a nosegay worth having, though the red weed in it should “side the lily,” and sundry of the prettiest flowers be held stalk upwards. Flowers are flowers and poets are poets, and “A book of the poets” must be right welcome at every hour of the clock.

For the preliminary essay, which is very moderately well done, we embrace it, with our fingers at least, in taking up the volume. It pleases us better on the solitary point of the devotional poets than Mr Campbell’s beautiful treatise, doing, as it seems to us, more frank justice to the Witherses, the Quarlesses, and the Crashaws. Otherwise the criticism and philosophy to be found in it are scarcely of the happiest,—although even the first astonishing paragraph which justifies the utility of poetry on the ground of its being an attractive variety of language, a persuasive medium for abstract ideas (as reasonable were the justification of a seraph’s essence deduced from the cloud beneath his foot!)—shall not provoke us back to discontent from the vision of the poets of England, suggested by the title of this “Book” and stretching along gloriously to our survey.

Our poetry has an heroic genealogy. It arose, where the sun rises, in the far East. It came out from Arabia and was tilted on the lance-heads of the Saracens into the heart of Europe, Armorica catching it in rebound from Spain, and England from Armorica. It issued in its first breath from Georgia wrapt in the gathering-cry of Persian Odin and passing from the orient of the sun to the antagonistic snows of Iceland and oversweeping the black pines

of Germany and the jutting shores of Scandinavia and embodying in itself all wayside sounds even to the rude shouts of the brazen-throated Cimbri—so modified, multiplied, resonant in a thousand Runic echoes it rushed abroad like a blast into Britain. In Britain, the Arabic Saracenic Armoric, and the Georgian Gothic Scandinavian mixed sound at last, and the dying suspirations of the Grecian and Latin literatures, the last low stir of the “Gesta Romanorum,” with the apocryphal personations of lost authentic voices, breathed up together through the fissures of the rent universe to help the new intonation and accomplish the cadence. Genius was thrust onward to a new slope of the world. And soon, when simpler minstrels had sat there long enough to tune the ear of the time—when Layamon and his successors had hummed long enough, like wild bees, upon the lips of our infant poetry predestined to eloquence,—then Robert [*sic*, but ? William] Langland, the monk walking for cloister “by a wode’s syde” on the Malvern Hills, took counsel with his holy “Flowman,” and sang of other visions than their highest ridge can show. While we write, the woods upon those beautiful hills are obsolete, even as Langland’s verses, scarcely a shrub grows upon the hills! but it is well for the thinkers of England to remember reverently, while, taking thought of her poetry, they stand among the gorse,—that if we may boast now of more honoured localities, of Shakespeare’s “rocky Avon,” and Spenser’s “soft-streaming Thames,” and Wordsworth’s “Rydal Mere,” still our first holy poet-ground is there.

But it is in Chaucer we touch the true height, and look abroad into the kingdoms and glories of our poetical literature,—it is with Chaucer that we begin our “Books of the Poets,” our collections and selections our pride of place and name. And the genius of the poet shares the character of his position—he was



made for an early poet, and the metaphors of dawn and spring doubly become him. A morning-star, a lark's exaltation, cannot usher in a glory better. The "cheerful morning face," "the breezy call of incense-breathing morn" you recognise in his countenance and voice: it is a voice full of promise and prophecy. He is the good omen of our poetry, the "good bird," according to the Romans, "the best good angel of the spring," the nightingale, according to his own creed of good luck, heard before the cuckoo.

Up rose the sunne, and uprose Emile, and uprose her poet, the first of a line of kings, conscious of futurity in his smile. He is a king and inherits the earth, and expands his great soul smilingly to embrace his great heritage. Nothing is too high for him to touch with a thought, nothing too low to dower with an affection. As a complete creature cognate of life and death, he cries upon God,—as a sympathetic creature he singles out a daisy from the universe ("si douce est la marguerite") to lie down by half a summer's day and bless it for fellowship. His senses are open and delicate, like a young child's—his sensibilities capacious of supersensual relations, like an experienced thinker's. Child-like, too, his tears and smiles lie at the edge of his eyes, and he is one proof more among the many, that the deepest pathos and the quickest gaieties hide together in the same nature. He is too wakeful and curious to lose the stirring of a leaf, yet not too wide awake to see visions of green and white ladies between the branches, and a fair house of fame and a noble court of love are built and holden in the winking of his eyelash. And because his imagination is neither too "high fantastical" to refuse proudly the gravitation of the earth, nor too "light of love" to lose it carelessly, he can create as well as dream, and work with clay as well as cloud, and when his men and women stand close by the actual ones, your stop-

watch shall reckon no difference in the beating of their hearts. He knew the secret of nature and art,—that truth is beauty,—and saying "I will make 'A Wife of Bath' as well as Emile, and you shall remember her as long," we do remember her as long. And he sent us a train of pilgrims, each with a distinct individuality apart from the pilgrimage, all the way from Southwark and the Tabard Inn, to Canterbury and Becket's shrine: and their laughter comes never to an end, and their talk goes on with the stars, and all the railroads which may intersect the spoilt earth for ever, cannot hush the "tramp, tramp" of their horses' feet.

Controversy is provocative. We cannot help observing, because certain critics observe otherwise, that Chaucer utters as true music as ever came from poet or musician, that some of the sweetest cadences in all our English are extant in his—"swete upon his tongue" in completest modulation. Let "Denham's strength and Waller's sweetness join" the *Io pæan* of a later age, the "*eurekamen*" of Pope and his generation. Not one of the "Queen Anne's men," measuring out tuneful breath upon their fingers, like ribbons for topknots, did know the art of versification as the old rude Chaucer knew it. Call him rude for the picturesqueness of the epithet, but his verse has, at least, as much regularity in the sense of true art, and more manifestly in proportion to our increasing acquaintance with his dialect and pronunciation, as can be discovered or dreamed in the French school. Critics indeed have set up a system based upon the crushed atoms of first principles, maintaining that poor Chaucer wrote by accent only! Grant to them that he counted no verses on his fingers, grant that he never disciplined his highest thoughts to walk up and down in a paddock—ten paces and a turn, grant that his singing is not after the likeness of their sing-song, but there end your admissions. It is our ineffaceable impression, in fact,

that the whole theory of accent and quantity held in relation to ancient and modern poetry stands upon a fallacy, totters rather than stands, and that when considered in connection with such old moderns as our Chaucer, the fallaciousness is especially apparent. Chaucer wrote by quantity, just as Homer did before him, just as Goethe did after him, just as all poets must. Rules differ, principles are identical. All rhythm presupposes quantity. Organ-pipe, or harp the musician plays by time. Greek or English, Chaucer or Pope the poet sings by time. What is this accent but a stroke, an emphasis with a successive pause to make complete the time? And what is the difference between this accent and quantity but the difference between a harp-note and an organ-note? otherwise, quantity expressed in different ways? It is as easy for matter to subsist out of space, as music out of time.

Side by side with Chaucer comes Gower, who is ungratefully disregarded too often because side by side with Chaucer. He who rides in the king's chariot will miss the people's "hic est." Could Gower be considered apart, there might be found signs in him of an independent royalty, however his fate may seem to lie in waiting for ever in his brother's antechamber, like Napoleon's tame kings. To speak our mind, he has been much undervalued. He is nailed to a comparative degree, and everybody seems to make it a condition of speaking of him, that something be called inferior within him, and something superior out of him. He is laid down flat, as a dark background for "throwing out" Chaucer's lights, he is used as a *πρὸς ὅσον* for leaping up into the empyrean of Chaucer's praise. This is not just nor worthy. His principal poem, the "Confessio Amantis," preceded the "Canterbury Tales," and proves an abundant fancy, a full head and full heart, and neither ineloquent. We do not praise its design,—in which the father-confessor is set up

as a storyteller like the Bishop of Tricca "avec lame," like the Cardinal de Retz, "le moins ecclésiastique du monde"—while we admit that he tells his stories as if born to the manner of it, and that they are not much the graver, nor, peradventure, the holier either for the circumstance of the confessorship. They are indeed told gracefully and pleasantly enough and if with no superfluous life and gesture, with an active sense of beauty in some sort and as flowing a rhythm as may bear comparison with many octosyllabics of our day, Chaucer himself having done more honour to their worth as stories than we can do in our praise, by adopting and crowning several of their number for king's sons within his own palaces. And this recalls that, at the opening of one glorious felony, the "Man of Lawe's Tale," he has written, a little unlawfully and ungratefully considering the connection, some lines of harsh significance upon poor Gower,—whence has been conjectured by the grey gossips of criticism a literary jealousy, an unholy enmity, nothing less than a soul-chasm between the contemporary poets. We believe nothing of it no, nor of the Shakespeare and Jonson feud after it—

To alle such cursed stories we saie fy

That Chaucer wrote in irritation is clear that he was angry seriously and lastingly, or beyond the pastime of passion spent in a verse as provoked by a verse, there appears to us no reason for crediting. But our idea of the nature of the irritation will expound itself in our idea of the offence, which is here in Dan Gower's proper words, as extracted from the *Ladie Venus's* speech in the "Confessio Amantis":

And grete well Chaucer when ye mete,  
As my disciple and poëte!—

Forthy now in his daies old,  
Thou shalt him tellè this message,  
That he upon his latter age,  
To sette an ende of alle his werke  
As he who is mine owne clerke,  
Do make his testament of love

We would not slander Chaucer's temper,—we believe, on the contrary, that he had the sweetest temper in the world,—and still it is our conviction, none the weaker, that he was far from being entirely pleased by this "message." We are sure he did not like the message, and not many poets would His "elvish countenance" might well grow dark, and "his sugred mouth" speak somewhat sourly in response to such a message. Decidedly, in our own opinion it was an impertinent message, a provocative message, a most inexcusable and odious message! Waxing hotter ourselves the longer we think of it, there is the more excuse for Chaucer. For, consider, gentle reader! this indecorous message preceded the appearance of the "Canterbury Tales," and proceeded from a rival poet in the act of completing his principal work,—its plain significance being "I have done my poem, and you cannot do yours because you are superannuated." And thus, while the great poet addressed was looking forward farther than the visible horizon, his eyes dilated with a mighty purpose. And to be counselled by this, to shut them forsooth, and take his crook and dog and place in the valleys like a grey shepherd of the Pyrenees—he who felt his foot strong upon the heights! he, with no wrinkle on his forehead deep enough to touch the outermost of inward smooth dreams—he, in the divine youth of his healthy soul, in the quenchless love of his embracing sympathies, in the untired working of his perpetual energies,—to "make an ende of alle his werke" and be old, as if he were not a poet! "Go to, O vain man,"—we do not reckon the age of the poet's soul by the shadow on the dial! Enough that it falls upon his grave.

Occleve and Lydgate both breathed the air of the world while Chaucer breathed it, although surviving him so long as rather to take standing as his successors than contemporaries. Both called him

"master" with a faithful reverting tenderness, and, however we are bound to distinguish Lydgate as the higher poet of the two, Occleve's "Alas" may become the other's lips—

Alas, that thou thine excellent prudence  
In thy bed mortell mightest not be-  
queath!

For alas! it is not bequeathed Lydgate's "Thebaid," attached by its introduction to "the Canterbury Tales," gives or enforces the occasion for sighing comparisons with the master's picturesque vivacity, while equally in delicacy and intensesness we admit no progress in the disciple. He does, in fact, appear to us so much overrated by the critics, that we are tempted to extend to his poetry his own admission on his monkish dress,—

I wear a habit of perfection  
Although my life agree not with that  
same,

and to opine concerning the praise and poetry taken together, that the latter agrees not with that same. An elegant poet—"poeta elegans"—was he called by the courteous Pits,—a questionable compliment in most cases, while the application in the particular one agrees not with that same. An improver of the language he is granted to be by all, and a voluminous writer of respectable faculties, in his position, could scarcely help being so. He has flashes of genius, but they are not prolonged to the point of warming the soul,—can strike a bold note, but fails to hold it on,—attains to moments of power and pathos, but wears, for working days, no habit of perfection.

These are our thoughts of Lydgate, and yet when he ceased his singing, none sang better, there was silence in the land. In Scotland, indeed, poet-tongues were not all mute, the air across the Border "gave delight and hurt not." Here in the South it was otherwise and unless we embrace in our desolation such poems as the rhyming chronicles of Harding and Fabian, we must hearken for music to the clashing of "Bilboa

blades," and be content that the wars of the Red and White Roses should silence the warbling of the nightingales. That figure dropped to our pen's point, and the reader may accept it as a figure—as no more. To illustrate by figures the times and the seasons of poetical manifestation and decay, is at once easier and more reasonable than to attempt to account for them by causes. We do not believe that poets multiply in peace-time like sheep and sheaves, nor that they fly, like partridges, at the first beating of the drum, and we do believe, having a previous faith in the pneumatic character of their gift, that the period of its bestowment is not subject to the calculations of our philosophy. Let, therefore, the long silence from Chaucer and his disciples down to the sixteenth century, be left standing as a fact undisturbed by any good reasons for its existence, or by any other company than some harmless metaphor—harmless and ineffectual as a glow-worm's glitter at the foot of a colossal statue of Harpocrates. Call it, if you please, as Warton does, "a nipping frost succeeding a premature spring," or call it, because we would not think our Chaucer premature, or the silence cruel—the trance of English Poetry—her breath, once emitted creatively, indrawn and retained,—herself sinking into deep sleep, like the mother of Apollonius before the glory of a vision, to awaken, to leap up (*ἐξέθopes* says Philostratus, the narrator) in a flowery meadow, at the clapping of the white wings of a chorus of encircling swans. We shall endeavour to realise this awaking.

Is Hawes a swan? a black (letter) swan? Certain voices will "say nay, say nay," and already, and without our provocation, he seems to us unjustly depreciated. Warton was called "the indulgent historian of our poetry," for being so kind as to discover "one fine line" in him! What name must the over kind have, in whose susceptible memories whole passages stand up erect, claiming the

epithet or the like of the epithet—and that, less as the largess of the indulgent than the debt of the just? Yet Langland's "Piers Plowman," and Chaucer's "House of Fame," and Lydgate's "Temple of Glasseye," and the "Pastyme of Plesure," by Stephen Hawes are the four columnar marbles, the four allegorical poems, on whose foundation is exalted into light the great allegorical poem of the world, Spenser's "Faery Queen." There was a force of suggestion which preceded Sackville's, and Hawes uttered it. His work is very grave for a pastime, being a course of instruction upon the seven sciences, the trivium and quadrivium of the schools, whereby Grand Amour scholar and hero wooing and winning Belle Pucelle marries her according to the *lex ecclesiæ*, is happy "all the rest of his life" by the *lex* of all matrimonial romances,—and, at leisure and in old age, dies by the *lex naturæ*. He tells his own story quite to an end, including the particulars of his funeral and epitaph, and is considerate enough to leave the reader in full assurance of his posthumous reputation. And now let those who smile at the design dismiss their levity before the poet's utterance—

O mortall folke, you may beholde and see  
Howe I lye here, sometime a mighty knight

The ende of joye and all prosperitie  
Is death at last thorough his course  
and might

After the day there cometh the dark night,

For though the day appear ever so long,  
At last the bell ringeth to even song

—it "ringeth" in our ear with a soft and solemn music to which the soul is prodigal of echoes. We may answer for the poetic faculty of its "maker." He is, in fact, not merely ingenious and fanciful, but abounds—the word, with an allowance for the unhappiness of his subject, is scarcely too strong,—with passages of thoughtful sweetness and cheerful tenderness, at which we are constrained to smile and sigh, and both for "pastyme"

Was never payne but it had joye at laste  
In the fayre morrow

There is a lovely cadence! And then Amour's courtship of his "swete ladie"—a "cynosure" before Milton's—conducted as simply, yet touchingly, as if he were innocent of the seven deadly sciences, and knew no more of "the Ladye Gram-mere" than might become a troubadour—

O swete ladie, the true and perfect star  
Of my true heart! O take ye now pitie!  
Think on my payne which am tofore you  
here,—

With your swete eyes behold you me, and  
see

How thought and woe by great extremitie  
Hath changed my colour into pale and  
wan!

It was not so when I to love began

The date assigned to this "Pastyme of Plesure" is 1506, some fifty years before the birth of Spenser. Whether it was written in vain for Spenser judge ye. To the present generation it is covered deep with the dust of more than three centuries, and few tongues ask above the place,—“What lies here?”

Barclay is our next swan, and verily might be mistaken, in any sort taken, by naturalists, for a crow. He is our first writer of eclogues, the translator of the "Ship of Fools," and a thinker of his own thoughts with sufficient intrepidity.

Skelton "floats double, swan and shadow," as poet laureate of the University of Oxford, and "royal orator" of Henry VII. He presents a strange specimen of a court-poet, and if, as Erasmus says "*Britannicarum literarum lumen*" at the same time—the light is a pitchy torchlight, wild and rough. Yet we do not despise Skelton despite him? it were easier to hate. The man is very strong, he triumphs, foams, is rabid, in the sense of strength, he mesmerises our souls with the sense of strength—it is as easy to despise a wild beast in a forest, as John Skelton, poet laureate. He is as like a wild beast as a poet laureate can be. In his wonderful

dominion over language, he tears it, as with teeth and paws, ravenously savagely devastating rather than creating, dominant rather for liberty than for dignity. It is the very *sansculottism* of eloquence, the oratory of a Silenus drunk with anger only. Mark him as the satyr of poets! fear him as the Juvenal of satyrs! and watch him with his rugged rapid, picturesque savageness his "breathless rhymes," to use the fit phrase of the satirist Hall, or—

His rhymes all ragged,  
Tattered and jagged,

to use his own,—climbing the high trees of Delphi, and pelting from thence his victim underneath, whether priest or cardinal, with rough rinded apples! And then ask, could he write otherwise than so? The answer is this opening to his poem of the "Bouge of Court" and the impression inevitable, of the serious sense of beauty and harmony to which it gives evidence.

In autumn when the sun *in virgine*  
By radiant heat enripened hath our come,  
When Luna, full of mutabilitie,  
As emperess, the diadem hath worne  
Of our pole Arctic, smiling as in scorn  
At our folie and our unstedfastnesse—

but our last word of Skelton must be, that we do not doubt his influence for good upon our language. He was a writer singularly fitted for beating out the knots of the cordage, and straining the lengths to extension, a rough worker at rough work. Strong, rough Skelton! We can no more deride him than my good lord cardinal could. If our critical eyebrows must motion contempt at somebody of the period, we choose Tusser, and his "Five Hundred Points of Good Husbandry and Housewifery." Whatever we say of Tusser, no fear of harming a poet,—

Make ready a bin  
For chaff to lie in,

and there may be room *therein*, in compliment to the author of the proposition, for his own verses.

Lord Surrey passes as the tuner

of our English nearly up to its present pitch of delicacy and smoothness, and we admit that he had a melody in his thoughts which they dared not disobey. That he is, as has been alleged by a chief critic, "our first metrical writer," lies not in our creed, and even Turberville's more measured praise,—

Our mother tongue by him hath got such lyght  
That ruder speche thereby is banisht qwyht,—

we have difficulty in accepting. We venture to be of opinion that he did not belong to that order of master-minds with whom transitions originate, although qualified, by the quickness of a yielding grace, to assist effectually a transitional movement. There are names which catch the proverbs of praise as a hedge-thorn catches sheep's wool, by position and approximation rather than adaptitude, and this name is of them. Yet it is a high name. His poetry makes the ear lean to it, it is so sweet and low, the English he made it of being ready to be sweet, and falling ripe in sweetness into other hands than his. For the poems of his friend, Sir Thomas Wyatt, have more thought, freedom and variety, more general earnestness, more of the attributes of masterdom than Lord Surrey's, while it were vain to reproach for lack of melody the writer of that loveliest lyric, "My lute, be still." And Wyatt is various in metres, and the first song-writer (that praise we must secure to him) of his generation. For the rest, there is an inequality in the structure of his verses which is very striking and observable in Surrey himself as in the language, consciously insecure in her position, were balancing her accentual being and the forms of her pronunciation, half giddily, on the very turning point of transition. Take from Wyatt such a stanza as this, for instance,—

The long love that in my thoughts I harbour,  
And in my heart doth keep his residence,

Into my face presseth with bold pretence,  
And there campeth, displaying his banner,

and oppose to it the next example, polished as Pope,—

But I am here in Kent and Christendom,  
Among the Muses where I read and rhyme,

Where, if thou list, mine own John Pains, to come,

Thou shalt be judge how I do spend my time

It is well to mark Wyatt as a leader in the art of didactic poetic composition under the epistolary form, "sternly milde" (as Surrey said of his countenance) in the leaning toward satire. It is very well to mark many of his songs as of exceeding beauty, and as preserving clear their touching simplicity from that plague of over-curious conceits which infest his writings generally. That was the plague of Italian literature transmitted by contagion, together with better things—together with the love of love-lore, and the sonnet structure, the summer-bower for one fair thought delighted in and naturalised in England by Wyatt and Surrey. For the latter—

From Tuscan came his ladye's worthy race

and his Muse as well as Geraldine. Drops from Plato's cup passing through Petrarch's, not merely perfumed and coloured but diluted by the medium, we find in Surrey's cup also. We must not underpraise Surrey to balance the overpraise we murmur at. Denying him supremacy as a reformer, the denial of his poetic nobleness is far from us. We attribute to him the chivalry of the *light* ages, we call him a scholastic troubadour. The longest and most beautiful of his poems ("describing the lover's whole state") was a memory in the mind of Milton when he wrote his "Allegro." He has that measure of pathos whose expression is no gesture of passion, but the skilful fingering on a well-tuned lute. He affects us at worst not painfully, and

With easie sighs such as folks draw in  
love

He wrote the first English blank verse, in his translation of two books of the *Æneid*. He leads, in seeming, to the ear of the world and by predestination of "popular breath," that little choral swan-chant which, swelled by Wyatt, Vaux, Bryan, and others, brake the common air in the days of the eighth Henry. And he fulfilled in sorrow his awarded fate as a poet, his sun going down at noon—and the cleft head, with its fair youthful curls, testifying like that fabled head of Orpheus to the music of the living tongue.

Sackville, Lord Dorset, takes up the new blank verse from the lips of Surrey, and turns it to its right use of tragedy. We cannot say that he does for it much more. His "Gorboduc," with some twenty years between it and Shakespeare is farther from the true drama in versification and all the rest, than "Gammer Gurton" is from "Gorboduc." Sackville's blank verse, like Lord Surrey's before him, is only heroic verse without rhyme. And we must say so in relation to Gascoigne who wrote the second blank verse tragedy, the "Jocasta" and the first blank verse original poem, "The Steele Glass." The secret of the blank verse of Shakespeare, and Fletcher, and Milton, did not dwell with them. The arched cadence, with its artistic keystone and underflood of broad continuous sound, was never achieved nor attempted by its first builders. We sometimes whisper in our silence that Marlowe's "brave sublunary" instincts should have groped that way. But no! Chaucer had more sense of music in the pause than Marlowe had. Marlowe's rhythm is not, indeed, hard and stiff and uniform, like the sentences of "Gorboduc," as if the pattern-one had been cut in boxwood there is a difference between uniformity and monotony, and he found it, his cadence revolves like a wheel, progressively if slowly and heavily and with an

orbicular grandeur of unbroken and unvaried music.

It remains to us to speak of the work by which Sackville is better known than by "Gorboduc,"—the "Mirror for Magistrates." The design of it has been strangely praised seeing that whatever that peculiar merit were, Iydgate's "Fall of Princes" certainly cast the shadow before. But Sackville's commencement of the execution proved the master's hand, and that the great canvas fell abandoned to the blurring brushes of inadequate disciples, was an ill-fortune compensated adequately by the honour attributed to the Induction—of inducing a nobler genius than his own, even Spenser's, to a nobler labour. We cannot doubt the influence of that Induction. Its colossal figures, in high allegorical relief, were exactly adapted to impress the outspread fancy of the most sensitive of poets. A yew-tree cannot stand at noon in an open pleasaunce without throwing the outline of its branches on the broad and sunny grass. Still, admitting the suggestion in its fulness, nothing can differ more than the allegorical results of the several geniuses of Lord Dorset and Spenser. Tear-drop and dew-drop respond more similarly to analysis, or morbid grief and ideal joy. Sackville stands close wrapt in the "blanket of his dark," and will not drop his mantle for the sun. Spenser's business is with the lights of the world, and the lights beyond the world.

But this Sackville, this Earl of Dorset ("Oh, a fair earl was he!"), stands too low for admeasurement with Spenser and we must look back, if covetous of comparisons to some one of a loftier and more kingly stature. We must look back far, and stop at Chaucer. Spenser and Chaucer do naturally remind us of each other, they two being the most cheerful-hearted of the poets—with whom cheerfulness, as an attribute of poetry, is scarcely a common gift. But the world will be upon us! The world moralises of

late and in its fashion, upon the immorality of mournful poems upon the criminality of "melodious tears," upon the morbidness of the sorrows of poets,—because Lord Byron was morbidly sorrowful, and because a crowd of his ephemeral imitators hung their heads all on one side and were insincerely sorrowful. The fact, however, has been, apart from Lord Byron and his disciples, that the " *ai ai* " of Apollo's flower is vocally sad in the prevailing majority of poetical compositions. The philosophy is, perhaps that the poetic temperament, half-way between the light of the ideal and the darkness of the real, and rendered by each more sensitive to the other, and unable, without a struggle, to pass out clear and calm into either, bears the impress of the necessary conflict in dust and blood. The philosophy may be, that only the stronger spirits do accomplish this victory, having lordship over their own genius, whether they accomplish it by looking bravely to the good ends of evil things, which is the practical ideal, and possible to all men in a measure—or by abstracting the inward sense from sensual things and their influences, which is subjectivity perfected—or by glorifying sensual things with the inward sense, which is objectivity transfigured—or by attaining to the highest vision of the idealist, which is subjectivity turned outward into an actual objectivity.

To the last triumph Shakespeare attained, but Chaucer and Spenser fulfilled their destiny and grew to their mutual likeness as cheerful poets, by certain of the former processes. They two are alike in their cheerfulness, yet are their cheerfulnesses most unlike. Each poet laughs yet their laughter ring with as far a difference as the sheep-bell on the hill and the joy-bell in the city. Each is earnest in his gladness each active in persuading you of it. You are persuaded, and hold each for a cheerful man. The whole difference is, that Chaucer has a cheerful humanity. Spenser, a

cheerful idealty. One rejoices walking on the sunny side of the street the other walking out of the street in a way of his own, kept green by a blessed vision. One uses the adroitness of his fancy by distilling out of the visible universe her occult smiles the other by fleeing beyond the possible frown, the occasions of natural ills, to that "cave of cloud" where he may smile safely to himself. One holds festival with men—sel-dom so coarse and loud indeed, as to startle the deer from their green covert at Woodstock—or with homely Nature and her "douce marguerite" low in the grasses the other adopts for his playfellows, imaginary or spiritual existences, and will not say a word to Nature herself, unless it please her to dress for his masque and speak daintily sweet and rare like a spirit. The human heart of one utters oracles, the imagination of the other speaks for his heart, and we miss no prophecy. For music we praised Chaucer's and not only as Dryden did for "a Scotch tune." But never issued there from lip or instrument, or the tuned causes of nature more lovely sound than we gather from our Spenser's art. His mouth is vowed away from the very possibilities of harshness. Right leans to wrong in its excess. His rhythm is the continuity of melody, not harmony, because too smooth for modulation—because "by his vow" he dares not touch a discord for the sake of consummating a harmony. It is the singing of an angel in a dream it has not enough of contrary for waking music. Of his great poem we may say that we miss no humanity in it, because we make a new humanity out of it and are satisfied in our human hearts—as new humanity vivified by the poet's life, moving in happy measure to the chanting of his thoughts, and upon ground supernaturally beautified by his sense of the beautiful. As an allegory, it enchants us away from its own purposes. Una is Una to us, and Sans Foy is a traitor and Errour is "an ugly monster," with a



"taile," and we thank nobody in the world, not even Spenser, for trying to prove it otherwise. Do we dispraise an allegorical poem by throwing off its allegory? we trow not. Probably, certainly to our impression, the highest triumph of an allegory, from this of the "Faery Queen," down to the "Pilgrim's Progress," is the abnegation of itself.

Oh those days of Elizabeth! We call them the days of Elizabeth, but the glory fell over the ridge in illumination of the half-century beyond those days of Elizabeth! Full were they of poets as the summer days are of birds,—

No branch on which a fine bird did not  
sit,  
No bird but his sweet song did shrilly  
sing,  
No song but did containe a lovely dit

We hear of the dramatists, and shall speak of them presently, but the lyric singers were yet more numerous,—there were singers in every class. Never since the first nightingale brake voice in Eden arose such a jubilee-concert never before nor since has such a crowd of true poets uttered true poetic speech in one day. Not in England evermore! Not in Greece, that we know. Not in Rome, by what we know. Talk of their Augustan era—we will not talk of it lest we desecrate our own of Elizabeth. The latter was rightly prefigured by our figure of the chorus of swans. It was besides the Milky Way of poetry it was the miracle age of poetical history. We may fancy that the master-souls of Shakespeare and Spenser, breathing, stirring in divine emotion, shot vibratory life through other souls in electric association we may hear, in fancy, one wind moving every leaf in a forest—one voice responded to by a thousand rock-echoes. Why, a common man walking through the earth in those days grew a poet by position—even as a child's shadow cast upon a mountain slope is dilated to the aspect of a giant's

If we, for our own parts, did enact a Briareus, we might count these poets on the fingers of our hundred hands, after the fashion of the poets of Queen Anne's time, counting their syllables. We do not talk of them as "faultless monsters," however wonderful in the multitude and verity of their gifts their faults were numerous, too. Many poets of an excellent sweetness, thinking of poetry that, like love,

It was to be all made of fantasy,—

fell poetry-sick as they might fall love-sick, and knotted associations, far and free enough to girdle the earth withal, into true love-knots of quaintest devices. Many poets affected novelty rather than truth, and many attained to novelty rather by attitude than altitude, whether of thought or word. Worst of all, many were incompetent to Sir Philip Sidney's ordeal—the translation of their verses into prose—and would have perished utterly by that hot ploughshare. Still, the natural healthy eye turns toward the light, and the true calling of criticism remains the distinguishing of beauty. Love and honour to the poets of Elizabeth—honour and love to them all! Honour even to the fellow-workers with Sackville in the "Mirror for Magistrates," to Ferrers, Churchyard and others, who had their hand upon the ore if they did not clasp it! and to Warner, the poet of Albion's England, singing snatches of ballad-pathos, while he worked, for the most part heavily, too, with a bowed back as at a stiff soil—and to Gascoigne, reflecting beauty and light from his "Steele Glass," though his "Fruites of War" are scarcely fruits from Parnassus—and to Daniel, tender and noble, and teaching, in his "Musoophilus," the chivalry of poets though in his "Civil Wars" somewhat too historical, as Drayton has written of him—and to Drayton, generous in the "Polyolbion" of his poet-blessing on every hill and river through this fair England, and not ineloquent in his Heroical Epistles, though some-

what tame and level in his "Barons' Wars"—and to the two brothers Fletcher, Giles and Phineas, authors of "Christ's Victory" and "The Purple Island," for whom the Muse's kiss followed close upon the mother's, gifting their lips with no vulgar music and their house with that noble kinsman, Fletcher the dramatist! Honour, too, to Davies, who "reasoned in verse" with a strong mind and strong enunciation, though he wrote one poem on the Soul and another on Dancing, and concentrated the diverging rays of intellect and folly in his sonnets on the reigning Astræa—and to Fulke Greville Lord Brooke, who had deep thoughts enough to accomplish ten poets of these degenerate days, though because of some obscurity in their expression you would find some twenty critics "full of oaths" by the Pyramids, that they all meant nought—and to Chamberlayne, picturesque, imaginative, earnest (by no means dramatic) in his poetic romance of "Pharonnida," though accumulative to excess of figures, and pedantic in such verbal learning as "entheon charms," the "catagraph" of a picture, the "exagitations and congestions of elements," *et sic omnia*!—to Chalkhill, wrapt, even bound, "in soft Lydian airs," till himself, as well as his Clearchus and Thealma, fall asleep in involutions of harmony—and to Browne, something languid in his "Britannia's Pastorals," by sitting in the sun with Guarini and Marini, and "perplexed in the extreme" by a thousand images and sounds of beauty calling him across the dewy fields—and to Wither, author of the "Shepherd's Hunting," and how much else? Wither, who wrote of poetry like a poet, and in return has been dishonoured and misprised by some of his own kind—a true sincere poet of blessed oracles Honour, love and praise to him and all! May pardon come to us from the unnamed.

Honour also to the translators of poems—to such as Chapman and Sylvester—great hearts, interpreters of great hearts and afterwards

worthily thanked by the Miltons, and Popes, and Keates, for their gift of greatness to the language of their England

Honour to the satirists! to Marston, who struck boldly and coarsely at an offender from the same level with the offender—to Hall, preserving his own elevation, and flashing downwardly those thick lightnings in which we smell the sulphur—and to Donne whose instinct to beauty overcame the resolution of his satiric humour

Honour, again, to the singers of brief poems, to the lyrists and sonnet-eers! O Shakespeare, let thy name rest gently among them, perfuming the place We "swear" that these sonnets and songs do verily breathe, "not of themselves, but *thee*" and we recognise and bless them as short sighs from thy large poetic heart, burdened with diviner inspiration! O rare Ben Jonson, let us have thy songs rounded each with a spherical thought, and the lyrics from thy masques alive with learned fantasy, and thine epigrams keen and quaint, and thy noble epitaphs, under which the dead seem stirring! Fletcher thou shalt be with us—prophet of "Comus" and "Penseroso"! giddy with inhalation from the fount of the beautiful, speaking out wildly thought upon thought, measure upon measure as the bird sings because his own voice is lovely to him Sidney, true knight and fantastic poet, whose soul did too curiously inquire the fashion of the beautiful—the fashion rather than the secret,—but left us in one line the completest "Ars Poetica" extant,—

Foole, sayde my Muse to mee, looke in  
thine heart, and write,—

thy name be famous in all England  
and Arcadia! And Raleigh, tender  
and strong, of voice sweet enough to  
answer that "Passionate Shepherd,"  
yet trumpet-shrill to speak the  
"Soul's errand" thrilling the depths  
of our own! having honour and  
suffering as became a poet, from the  
foot of the Lady of England light  
upon his cloak, to the cloak of  
his executioner wrapping redly his

breathless corpse Marlowe,—we must not forget his "Shepherd" in his tragedies and "Come live with me" sounds passionately still through the dead cold centuries. And Drummond, the overpraised and underpraised,—a passive poet, if we may use the phraseology—who was not careful to achieve greatness, but whose natural pulses beat music, and with whom the consciousness of life was the sentiment of beauty. And Lyly, shriven from the sins of his "Euphues," with a quaint grace in his songs, and Donne, who takes his place naturally in this new class, having a dumb angel and knowing more noble poetry than he articulates Herrick, the Ariel of poets, sucking "where the bee sucks" from the rose-heart of nature, and reproducing the fragrance idealised, and Carew, using all such fragrance as a courtly essence, with less of self-abandonment and more of artificial application, and Herbert, with his face as the face of a spirit, dimly bright, and fantastic Quarles, in rude and graphic gesticulation, expounding verity and glory, and Breton, and Turberville, and Lodge, and Hall (not the satirist) and all the hundred swans, nameless or too numerous to be named, of that Cayster of the rolling time.

Then, high in the miraculous climax, come the dramatists—from whose sinews was knit the overcoming strength of our literature over all the nations of the world. "The drama is the executive of literature," said De Stael and the Greek's "action, action, action," we shall not miss in our drama. Honour to the dramatists, as honour from them!

We must take a few steps backward for position's sake, and then be satisfied with a rapid glance at the Drama. From the days of Norman William, the representations called Mysteries and Moralities had come and gone without a visible poet, and Skelton appears before us almost the first English claimant of a dramatic reputation, with the authorship of the interludes of "Magnificence"

and the "Nigromansir." The latter is chiefly famous for Warton's affirmation of having held it in his hands, giving courteous occasion to Ritson's denial of its existence and our own palms having never been crossed by the silver of either, we cannot prophesy on the degree of individual honour involved in the literary claim. Bale, one of the eighth Henry's bishops, was an active composer of Moralities, and John Heywood, his royal jester and "author of that very merry interlude" called "The Four P's," united in his merriment that caustic sense with that lively ease, which have not been too common since in his accomplished dramatic posterity. Yet those who in the bewilderment of their admirations (or senses) attribute to John Heywood the "Pinner of Wakefield," are more obviously—we are sorely tempted to add more ridiculously—wrong, than those who attribute it to Shakespeare. The Canon of Windsor's "Ralph Royster Doyster," and the Bishop of Bath and Wells's "Gammer Gurton," followed each other close into light, the earliest modern comedies, by the force of the *ame ecclésiastique*. A little after came Ferrys, memorialised by Puttenham as "the principal man of his profession" (of poetry), and "of no lesse myrthe and felicitie than John Heywood, but of much more skille and magnificence in his meter." But seeing that even Oblivion forgot Ferrys, leaving his name and Puttenham's praise when she defaced his works, and seeing, too, the broad farcedom of the earlier, however episcopal, writers, we find ourselves in an unwilling posture of recognition before Edwards, as the first extant regular dramatist of England. It is a pitiful beginning, "The Four P's" would be a more welcome A to us. They express more power with their inarticulate roughness than does this "Damon and Pythias," with its rhymed, loitering frigidity, or even than this "Palamon and Arcite," in which the sound of the hunting horn cast into ecstasy the too gracious

soul of Queen Elizabeth But Sir John Davies's divine Astræa was, at that grey dawn of her day, ignorant of greater poets, and we ("happy in this") go on toward them After Edwards, behold Sackville with that "Gorboduc" we have named, the first blank verse tragedy we can name, praised by Sidney for its exemplary preservation of the unities and for "climbing to the height of Seneca his stile,"—tight-fitting praise considering that the composition is high enough to account for its snow, and cold enough to emulate the Roman's And after Sackville, behold the first dramatic geniuses, in juxtaposition with the first dramatists—Peele, and Kyd, mad as his own Hieronimo (we will grant it to such critics as are too utterly in their senses), only—

When he is mad,  
Then, methinks, he is a brave fellow!  
and then, methinks, and by such madness, the possibility of a Shakespeare was revealed Kyd's blank verse is probably the first breaking of the true soil, and certainly far better and more dramatic than Marlowe's is—crowned poet as the latter stands before us—poet of the English "Faustus," which we will not talk of against the German, nor set up its grand, luxurious, melancholy devil against Goethe's subtle, biting, Voltaireish devil, each being devil after its kind,—the poet of the Jew which Shakespeare drew (not), yet a true Jew "with a berde,"—and the poet of the first historical drama,—since the "Gorboduc" scarcely can be called one Marlowe was more essentially a poet than a dramatist and if the remark appear self-evident and universally applicable, we will take its reverse in Kyd, who was more essentially, with all his dramatic faults, a dramatist than a poet Passing from the sound of the elemental monotonies of the rhythm of Marlowe, we cannot pause before Nash and Green to distinguish their characteristics It is enough to name these names of gifted dramatists, who lived, or at

least wrote, rather before Shakespeare than with him, and helped to make him credible Through them, like a lens, we behold his light Of them we conjecture—these are the blind elements working before the earthquake,—before the great "Shakespeare scene," as Greene said when he was cross And we may say when we are fanciful, these are the experiments of Nature, made in her solution of the problem of how much deathless poetry will agree with how much mortal clay—these are the potsherd vessels half filled, and failing at last,—until up to the edge of one, the liquid inspiration rose and bubbled in hot beads to quench the thirsty lips of the world

It is hard to speak of Shakespeare, these measures of the statures of common poets fall from our hands when we seek to measure him it is harder to praise him Like the tall plane-tree which Xerxes found standing in the midst of an open country, and honoured inappropriately with his "barbaric pomp," with bracelets and chains and rings suspended on its branches, so has it been with Shakespeare A thousand critics have commended him with praises as unsuitable as a gold ring to a plane-tree A thousand hearts have gone out to him, carrying necklaces Some have discovered that he individualised, and some that he generalised, and some that he subtilised—almost *trans*-transcendentally Some would have it that he was a wild genius, sowing wild oats and stealing deer to the end, with no more judgment forsooth than "youth the hare," and some, that his very pulses beat by that critical law of art in which he was blameless—some, that all his study was in his horn-book, and not much of that, and some, that he was as learned a polyglot as ever had been dull but for Babel—some, that his own ideal burned steadfastly within his own fixed contemplations, unstirred by breath from without, and some, that he wrote for the gold on his palm and the "rank popular breath" in his nos-

trils, apart from consciousness of greatness and desire of remembrance. If the opinions prove nothing, their contradictions prove the exaltation of the object, their contradictions are praise. For men differ about things above their reach, not within it,—about the mountains in the moon, not Primrose Hill and more than seven cities of men have differed in their talk about Homer also. Homer, also, was convicted of indiscreet nodding, and Homer, also, had no manner of judgment, and the “*Ars Poetica*” people could not abide his bad taste. And we find another analogy. We, who have no leaning to the popular cant of Romanticism and Classicism, and believe the old Greek *BEAUTY* to be both new and old, and as alive and not more grey in Webster’s “*Duchess of Malfy*” than in *Æschylus*’s “*Eumenides*,” do reverence this Homer and this Shakespeare as the colossal borderers of the two intellectual departments of the world’s age,—do behold from their feet the antique and modern literatures sweep outwardly away, and conclude, that whereas the Greek bore in his depth the seed and prophecy of all the Hellenic and Roman poets, so did Shakespeare, “whose seed was in himself” also, those of a later generation.

For the rest we must speak briefly of Shakespeare, and very weakly too, except for love. That he was a great natural genius nobody, we believe, has doubted—the fact has passed with the cheer of mankind, but that he was a great artist the majority has doubted. Yet Nature and Art cannot be reasoned apart into antagonistic principles. Nature is God’s art—the accomplishment of a spiritual significance hidden in a sensible symbol. Poetic art (man’s) looks past the symbol with a divine guess and reach of soul into the mystery of the significance,—disclosing from the analysis of the visible things the synthesis or unity of the ideal,—and expounds like symbol and like significance out of the infinite of God’s

doing into the finite of man’s comprehending. Art lives by Nature, and not the bare mimetic life generally attributed to Art. She does not imitate, she expounds. *Interpres natura*—is the poet-artist, and the poet wisest in nature is the most artistic poet and thus our Shakespeare passes to the presidency unquestioned, as the greatest artist in the world. We believe in his judgment as in his genius. We believe in his learning, both of books and men, and hills and valleys in his grammars and dictionaries we do not believe. In his philosophy of language we believe absolutely in his Babel-learning, not at all. We believe reverently in the miracle of his variety, and it is observable that we become aware of it less by the numerousness of his persons and their positions, than by the *depth* of the least of either,—by the sense of visibility beyond what we see, as in nature. Our creed goes on to declare him most passionate and most rational—of an emotion which casts us into thought, of a reason which leaves us open to emotion. Most grave and most gay—while we scarcely can guess that the man Shakespeare is grave or gay, because he interposes between ourselves and his personality the whole breadth and length of his ideality. His associative faculty—the wit’s faculty besides the poet’s,—for him who was both wit and poet, shed sparks like an electric wire. He was wise in the world, having studied it in his heart, what is called “the knowledge of the world” being just the knowledge of one heart, and certain exterior symbols. What else? What otherwise could he, the young transgressor of Sir Thomas *Lacy*’s fences, new from Stratford and the Avon, close in theatrical London, have seen or touched or handled of the *Hamlets* and *Lears* and *Othellos*, that he should draw them? “How can I take portraits,” said *Marmontel*, in a similar inexperience, “before I have beheld faces?” *Voltaire* embraced him, in reply. Well ap-

plauded, Voltaire! It was a *mot* for Marmontel's utterance, and Voltaire's praise—for Marmontel, not for Shakespeare. Every being is his own centre to the universe, and in himself must one foot of the compass be fixed to attain to any measurement: nay, every being is his own mirror to the universe. Shakespeare wrote from within—the beautiful, and we recognise from within—the true. He is universal, because he is individual. And without any prejudice of admiration, we may go on to account his faults to be the proofs of his power, the cloud of dust cast up by the multitude of the chanots. The activity of his associative faculty is occasionally morbid in the abundance of his winged thoughts, the locust flies with the bee, and the ground is dark with the shadow of them. Take faults, take excellences, it is impossible to characterise thus Shakespeare by an epithet: have we heard the remark before, that it should sound so obvious? We say of Corneille, the noble, of Racine, the tender, of Æschylus, the terrible, of Sophocles, the perfect, but not one of these words, not one appropriately descriptive epithet, can we attach to Shakespeare without a conscious recoil. Shakespeare! the name is the description.

He is the most wonderful artist in blank verse of all in England, and almost the earliest. We do not say that he first broke the enchainment of monotony, of which the Sackvilles and the Marlowes left us complaining, because the versification of "Hieronimo" ran at its own strong will, and the "Pinner of Wakefield" may have preceded his first plays. We do not even say, what we might, that his hand first proved the compass and infinite modulation of the new instrument, but we do say, that it never answered another hand as it answered his. We do say, this fingering was never learned of himself by another. From Massinger's more resonant majesty, from even Fletcher's more numerous and artful cadences, we turn back to his artlessness of art, to

his singular and supreme estate as a versificator. Often when he is at the sweetest, his words are poor monosyllables, his pauses frequent to brokenness, and the structure of the several lines less varied than was taught after Fletcher's masterdom, but the whole results in an ineffable charming of the ear which we acquiesce in without seeking its cause, a happy mystery of music.

This is little for Shakespeare, yet so much for the place, that we are forced into brevities for our observations which succeed. We chronicle only the names of Chapman, Dekker, Webster, Tourneur, Randolph, Middleton, and Thomas Heywood, although great names, and worthy, it is not too much to add, of Shakespeare's brotherhood. Many besides lean from our memory to the paper, but we put them away reverently. It was the age of the dramatists—the age of strong passionate men, scattering on every side their good and evil oracles of vehement humanity, and extenuating no thought in its word, and in that age "to write like a man" was a deed accomplished by many besides him of whom it was spoken, Jonson's "son Cartwright."

At Jonson's name we stop perforce, and do salutation in the dust to the impress of that "learned sock." He was a learned man, as everybody knows, and, as everybody does not believe, not the worse for his learning. His maternal, brought laboriously from East and West, is wrapped in a flame of his own. If the elasticity and abandonment of Shakespeare and of certain of Shakespeare's brothers are not found in his writings, the reason of the defects need not be sought out in his readings. His genius, high and verdant as it drew, yet belonged to the hard woods: it was lance-wood rather than bow-wood—a genius rather noble than graceful—eloquent, with a certain severity and emphasis of enunciation. It would have been the same if he, too, had known 'little Latin and lesse Greek.'

There was a dash of the rhetorical in his dramatic. Not that we deny him empire over the passions his heart had rhetoric as well as his understanding, and he wrote us a "Sad Shepherd," as well as a "Cathline." His versification heaves heavily with thought. For his comic powers, let "Volpone" and "The Alchymist" attest them with that unextinguishable laughter which is the laughter of gods or poets still more than of the wits' coffee-house. Was it "done at the Mermaid," was it ever fancied there that "rare Ben Jonson" should be called a pedantic poet? Nay, but only a scholastic one.

And Beaumont and Fletcher, the Castor and Pollux of this starry poetic sphere (*lucida sidera*), our silence shall not cover them, nor will we put asunder, in our speech, the names which friendship and poetry joined together, nor distinguish, by a laboured analysis, the vivacity of one from the solidity of the other, seeing that men who, according to tradition, lived in one house, and wore one cloak, and wrote on one page, may well, by the sanctity of that one grave they have also in common, maintain for ever beyond it the unity they coveted. The characteristics of these writers stand out in a softened light from the deep tragic background of the times. We may liken them to Shakespeare in one mood of his mind, because there are few classes of beauty the type or likeness of which is not discoverable in Shakespeare. From the rest they stand out contrastingly, as the Apollo of the later Greek sculpture-school,—too graceful for divinity and too vivacious for marble,—placed in a company of the antiquer statues with their grand blind look of the almightiness of repose. We cannot say of these poets, as of the rest, "they write all like men," we cannot think they write like women either: perhaps they write a little like centaurs. We are of opinion in any way, that the grace is more obvious than the strength, and there

may be something centauresque and of twofold nature in their rushing mutabilities, and changes on passion and weakness. Clearest of all is that they wrote like poets, and in a versification most surpassingly musical though liberal, as it music served them for love's sake, unbound! They had an excellent genius, but not a strong enough invention to include judgment, judgment being the consistency of invention, and consistency always, whether in morals or literature, depending upon strength. We do not, in fact, find in them any perfect and covenanted whole—we do not find it in character, or in plot, or in composition, and lamenting the defect on many grounds, we do so on this chief one, that their good is just good, their evil just evil, unredeemed into good like Shakespeare's and Nature's evil by unity of design, but lying apart, a willingly chosen, through and through evil—and "by this time it stinketh." If other results are less lamentable, they are no less fatal. The mirror which these poets held up to us is vexed with a thousand cracks, and everything visible is in fragments. Their conceptions all tremble on a peradventure—"peradventure they shall do well," there is no royal absolute will that they should do well: the poets are less kings than workmen. And being workmen they are weak—the moulds fall from their hands—are clutched with a spasm or fall with a faintness. After which querulousness, we shall leave the question as to whether their tragic or comic powers be put to more exquisite use,—not for solution, nor for doubt (since we hold fast an opinion), but for praise the most rarely appropriate or possible.

One passing word of Ford, the pathetic—for he may wear on his sleeve the epithet of Euripides, and no daw peck there. Most tender is he, yet not to feebleness—most mournful, yet not to languor, yet we like to hear the war-horse leaps of Dekker on the same tragic ground with him, producing at once con-

trast and completeness Ungrateful thought! the "Witch of Edmonton" bewitched us to it Ford can fill the ear and soul singly with the trumpet-note of his pathos, and in its pauses you shall hear the murmuring voices of nature,—such a nightingale, for instance, as never sang on a common night Then that death scene in the "Broken Heart!" who has equalled *that*? It is single in the drama,—the tragic of tragedy, and the sublime of grief A word, too, of Massinger, who writes all like a giant—a dry-eyed giant He is too ostentatiously strong for flexibility, and too heavy for rapidity, and monotonous through his perpetual final trochee, his gesture and enunciation are slow and majestic And another word of Shirley, an inferior writer, though touched, to our fancy, with something of a finer ray, and closing, in worthy purple, the procession of the Elizabethan men Shirley is the last dramatist *Valete et plaudite, O posteri*

Standing in his traces, and looking backward and before, we become aware of the distinct demarcations of five eras of English poetry the first, the Chaucerian, although we might call it *Chaucer* the second, the Elizabethan, the third, which culminates in Cowley, the fourth, in Dryden and the French school, the fifth, the return to nature in Cowper and his successors of our day These five rings mark the age of the fair and stungless serpent we are impelled, like the ancient mariner, to bless—but not "unaware" "*Ah benedicite!*" we bless her so, out of our Chaucer's rubric, softly, but with a plaintiveness of pleasure For when the last echo of the Elizabethan harmonies had died away with Shirley's footsteps, in the twilight of that golden day, when Habington and Lovelace, and every last bird before nightfall was dumb, and Crashaw's fine rapture, holy as a summer sense of silence, left us to the stars—the first voices startling the thinker from his reverting thoughts, are verily of another spirit The voices are elo-

quent enough, thoughtful enough, fanciful enough, but something is defective Can any one suffer, as an experimental reader, the transition between the second and third periods, without feeling that something is defective? What is so? And who dares to guess that it may be *INSPIRATION*?

"Poetry is of too spiritual a nature," Mr Campbell has observed, "to admit of its authors being exactly grouped by a Linnæan system of classification" Nevertheless, from those subtle influences which poets render and receive, and from other causes less obvious but no less operative, it has resulted even to ourselves in this slight survey of the poets of our country, that the signs used by us simply as signs of historical demarcation have naturally fallen or risen into signs of poetical classification The five eras we spoke of just now, have indeed each a characteristic as clear in poetry as in chronology, and a deeper gulf than an *Anno Domini* yawns betwixt an Elizabethan man and a man of that third era upon which we are entering The change of the poetical characteristic was not, indeed, without gradation The hands of the clock had been moving silently for a whole hour before the new one struck, and even in Davies, even in Drayton, we felt the cold foreshadow of a change The word "sweetness," which presses into our sentences against the will of our rhetoric whenever we speak of Shakespeare ("sweetest Shakespeare") or his kin, we lose the taste of in the later waters, they are brackish with another age

In what did the change consist? Practically and partially in the idol-worship of *rhyme* Among the elder poets, the rhyme was only a felicitous adjunct, a musical accompaniment, the tinkling of a cymbal through the choral harmonies You heard it across the changes of the pause, as an undertone of the chant, marking the time with an audible indistinctness, and catching occasionally and



reflecting the full light of the emphasis of the sense in mutual elucidation. But the new practice endeavoured to identify in all possible cases the rhyme and what may be called the sentimental emphasis, securing the latter to the tenth rhyming syllable, and so dishonouring the emphasis of the sentiment into the base use of the marking of the time. And not only by this unnatural provision did the emphasis minister to the rhyme, but the pause did it also. "Away with all pauses,"—said the reformers,—“except the legitimate pause at the tenth rhyming syllable. O rhyme, live for ever! Rhyme alone take the incense from our altars,—tinkling cymbal alone be our music!”—And so arose, in dread insignificance, the Heart-and-impart men.

Moreover, the corruption of the versification was but a type of the change in the poetry itself, and sufficiently expressive. The accession to the throne of the poets, of the *wits* in the new current sense of the term, or of the *beaux esprits*—a term to be used the more readily because descriptive of the actual pestilential influence of French literature—was accompanied by the substitution of elegant thoughts for poetic conceptions (“elegant,” alas! beginning to be the critical pass-word), of adroit illustrations for beautiful images, of ingenuity for genius. Yet this third era is only the preparation for the fourth consummating one—the hesitation before the crime—we smell the blood through it in the bath-room. And our fancy grows hysterical, like poor Octavia, while the dismal extent of the “quantum mutatus” develops itself in detail.

“Waller’s sweetness!” it is a needy antithesis to Denham’s strength—and, if anything beside, a sweetness as far removed from that which we have lately recognised, as the saccharine of the palate from the melodious of the ear. Will Saccharissa frown at our comparison from the high sphere of his verse? or will she, a happy “lady who can sleep when she

pleases,” please to oversleep our offence? It is certain that we but walk in her footsteps in our disdain of her poet, even if we disdain him—and most seriously we disown any such partaking of her “crueltie.” Escaping from the first astonishment of an unhappy transition, and from what is still more vexing, those “base, common, and popular” critical voices, which, in and out of various “arts of poetry,” have been pleased to fix upon this same transitional epoch as the genesis of excellence to our language and versification, we do not, we hope it of ourselves, undervalue Waller. There is a certain grace “beyond the reach of art,” or rather beyond the destructive reach of his ideas of art, to which, we opine, if he had not been a courtier and a renegade, the Lady Dorothea might have bent her courtly head unabashed, even as the Penshurst beeches did. We gladly acknowledge in him, as in Denham and other poets of the transition, an occasional remorseful recurrence by half lines and whole lines, or even a few lines together, to the poetic Past. We will do anything but agree with Mr Hallam, who, in his excellent and learned work on the Literature of Europe, has passed some singular judgments upon the poets, and none more startling than his comparison of Waller to Milton, on the ground of the sustenance of power. The crying truth is louder than Mr Hallam, and cries, in spite of Fame, with whom poor Waller was an *enfant trouvé*, an heir by chance, rather than merit,—that he is feeble poetically quite as surely as morally and politically, and that, so far from being an equal and sustained poet, he has not strength for unity even in his images, nor for continuity in his thoughts, nor for adequacy in his expression, nor for harmony in his versification. This is at least our strong and sustained impression of Edmund Waller.

With a less natural gift of poetry than Waller, Denham has not only more strength of purpose and lan-

guage (an easy superiority), but some strength in the abstract he puts forth rather a sneewy hand to the new structure of English versification. It is true, indeed, that in his only poem which survives to any competent popularity—his “Cooper’s Hill”—we may find him again and again, by an instinct to a better principle, receding to the old habit of the medial pause, instead of the would-be sufficiency of the final one. But, generally, he is true to his modern sect of the Pharisees and he helps their prosperity otherwise by adopting that Pharisaic fashion of setting forth, vangloriously, a little virtue of thought and poetry in pointed and antithetic expression, which all the wits delighted in, from himself, a chief originator, to Pope, the perfecter. The famous lines, inheriting by entail a thousand critical admirations—

Strong without rage, without o’erflowing  
full,

and, as Sydney Smith might put in, “a great many other things without a great many other things,” contain the germ and prophecy of the whole Queen Anne’s generation. For the rest, we will be brief in our melancholy, and say no more of Denham than that he was a Dryden *in small*.

The genius of the new school was its anomaly, even Abraham Cowley. We have said nothing of “the metaphysical poets” because we disclaim the classification, and believe with Mr Leigh Hunt, that every poet, inasmuch as he is a poet, is a metaphysician. In taking note, therefore, of this Cowley, who stands on the very vibratory soil of the transition, and stretches his faltering and protesting hands on either side to the old and to the new, let no one brand him for “metaphysics.” He was a true poet, both by natural constitution and cultivation but without the poet’s heart. His admirers have compared him to Pindar, and, taking Pindar out of his rapture they may do so still he was a Pindar writing by *métier* rather than by *verve*. In rapidity and subtlety of the

associative faculty, which, however, with him, moved circularly rather than onward, he was sufficiently Pindaric but, as it is a fault in the Greek lyrist to leave his buoyancy to the tumultuous rush of his associations too unmisgivingly and entirely for the right reverence of Unity in Beauty,—so is it the crime of the English poet to commit coldly what the other permitted passively, and with a conscious volition, quick yet calm, calm when quickest, to command from the ends of the universe the associations of material sciences and spiritual philosophies. Quickness of the associative or suggestive faculty is common, we have had occasion to observe, to the wit (in the modern sense) and the poet, its application only, being of a reverse difference. Cowley confounded the application, and became a witty poet. The Elizabethan writers were inclined to a too curious illuminating of thought by imagery. Cowley was coarsely curious he went to the shambles for his chambers of imagery, and very often through the mud. All which faults appear to us attributable to his coldness of temperament, and his defectiveness in the instinct towards Beauty, to having the intellect only of a great poet, not the sensibility. His “Davideis,” our first epic in point of time, has fine things in it. His translations, or rather paraphrases, of Anacreon are absolutely the most perfect of any English composition of their order. His other poems contain profuse material, in image and reflection, for the accomplishment of three poets, each greater than himself. He approached the beautiful and the true as closely as mere Fancy could, but that very same Fancy unfixed by feeling, too often, in the next breath, approximated him to the hideous and the false. Noble thoughts are in Cowley—we say noble, and we might say sublime, but, while we speak, he falls below the first praise. Yet his influence was for good rather than for evil, by inciting to a struggle backward, a delay in the revolution-

any movement and this although a wide gulf yawned between him and the former age, and his heart's impulse was not strong enough to cast him across it. For his actual influence, he lifts us up and casts us down—charms, and goes nigh to disgust us—does all but make us love and weep.

And then came "glorious John," with the whole fourth era in his arms,—and eloquent above the sons of men, to talk down, thunder down poetry as if it were an exhalation. Do we speak as if he were not a poet? Nay, but we speak of the character of his influences, nay, but he was a poet—an excellent poet—in marble and Phidias, with the sculpturesque ideal separated from his working tool, might have carved him. He was a poet without passion, just as Cowley was but, then, Cowley lived by fancy, and that would have been poor living for John Dryden. Unlike Cowley, too, he had an earnestness which of itself was influential. He was inspired in his understanding and his senses only, but to the point of disenchanting the world most marvelously. He had a large soul for a man, containing sundry Queen Anne's men, one within another, like quartetto tables, but it was not a large soul for a poet, and it entertained the universe by potato-patches. He established finally the reign of the literati for the reign of the poets—and the critics clapped their hands. He established finally the despotism of the final emphasis—and no one dared, in affecting criticism, to speak any more at all against a tinkling cymbal. And so, in distinctive succession to poetry and inspiration, began the new system of harmony "as by law established," and so he translated Virgil not only into English but into Dryden, and so he was kind enough to translate Chaucer too, as an example,—made him a much finer speaker, and not, according to our doxy, so good a versifier—and cured the readers of the old "Knight's Tale" of sundry of their tears, and so he reasoned powerfully in verse—

and threw into verse, besides, the whole force of his strong sensual being, and so he wrote what has been called from generation to generation, down to the threshold of our days, "the best ode in the English language." To complete which successes, he thrust out nature with a fork, and for a long time and in spite of Horace's prophecy, she never came back again. Do we deny our gratitude and his glory to glorious John because we speak thus? In nowise would we do it. He was a man greatly endowed, and our language and our literature remain, in certain respects, the greater for his greatness—more practical, more rapid, and with an air of mixed freedom and adroitness which we welcome as an addition to the various powers of either. With regard to his influence—and he was most influential upon poetry—we have spoken, and have the whole of the opening era from which to prove.

While we return upon our steps for a breathing moment and pause before Milton,—the consideration occurs to us that a person of historical ignorance in respect to this divine poet, would hesitate and be at a loss to which era of our poetry to attach him through the internal evidence of his works. He has not the tread of a contemporary of Dryden, and Rochester's nothingness is a strange accompaniment to the voice of his greatness. Neither can it be quite predicated of him that he walks an Elizabethan man, there is a certain fine bloom or fanna, rather felt than seen, upon the old poems, unrecognised upon his. But the love of his genius leant backward to those olden oracles, and it is pleasant to think that he was actually born before Shakespeare's death, that they too looked upwardly to the same daylight and stars, and that he might have stretched his baby arms ("animosus infans") to the faint hazel eyes of the poet of poets. Let us think in anywise that he drew in some living subtle Shakespearian benediction, providing for greatness

The Italian poets had "rained influence" on the Elizabethan "field of the cloth of gold," and from the Italian poets as well as the classical sources and the elder English ones, did Milton accomplish his soul. Yet the poet Milton was not made by what he received, not even by what he loved. High above the current of poetical influences he held his own grand personality, and there never lived poet in any age (unless we assume ignorantly of Homer) more isolated in the contemporaneous world than he. He was not worked upon from out of it, nor did he work outwardly upon it. As Cromwell's secretary and Salmasius's antagonist, he had indeed an audience, but as a poet, a scant one, his music, like the spherical tune, being inaudible because too fine and high. It is almost awful to think of him issuing from the arena of controversy victorious and *blind*,—putting away from his dark brows the bloody laurel, left alone after the heat of the day by those for whom he had combated, and originating in that enforced dark quietude his epic vision for the inward sight of the unborn, so to avenge himself on the world's neglect by exacting from it an eternal future of reminiscence. The circumstances of the production of his great work are worthy in majesty of the poem itself, and the writer is the ideal to us of the majestic personality of a poet. He is the student, the deep thinker, the patriot, the believer the thorough brave man,—breathing freely for truth and freedom under the leaden weights of his adversities never reproaching God for his griefs by his despair, working in the chain, praying without ceasing in the serenity of his sightless eyes; and, because the whole visible universe was swept away from betwixt them and the Creator, contemplating more intently the invisible infinite, and shaping all his thoughts to it in grander proportion. O noble Christian poet! Which is hardest? self-renunciation, and the sackcloth and the cave—or grief-

renunciation, and the working on, on, under the stripe? He did what was hardest. He was Agonistes building up, instead of pulling down; and his high religious fortitude gave a character to his works. He stood in the midst of those whom we are forced to consider the corrupt versificators of his day, an iconoclast of their idol rhyme, and protesting practically against the sequestration of pauses. His lyrical poems, move they ever so softly, step loftily, and with something of an epic air. His sonnets are the first sonnets of a free rhythm—and this although Shakespeare and Spenser were sonneteers. His "Comus," and "Samson," and "Lycidas"—how are we to praise them? His epic is the second to Homer's, and the first in sublime effects—a sense as of divine benediction flowing through it from end to end. Not that we compare, for a moment, Milton's genius with Homer's, but that Christianity is in the poem besides Milton. If we hazard a remark which is not admiration, it shall be this—that with all his heights and breadths (which we may measure geometrically if we please from the "Davideis" of Cowley)—with all his rapt devotions and exaltations towards the highest of all, we do miss something (we at least, who are writing, miss something) of what may be called, but rather metaphysically than theologically, *spirituality*. His spiritual personages are vast enough, but not rarefied enough. They are humanities, enlarged, uplifted, transfigured—but no more. In the most spiritual of his spirits there is a conscious, obvious, even ponderous materialism. And hence comes the celestial gunpowder, and hence the clashing with swords, and hence the more continuous evil which we feel better than we describe, the thick atmosphere clouding the heights of the subject. And if anybody should retort, that complaining so we complain of Milton's humanity—we shake our heads. For Shakespeare also was a *man*, and our creed is, that the "Midsummer

Night's Dream" displays more of the fairyhood of faeries than the "Paradise Lost" does of the angelhood of angels. The example may serve the purpose of explaining our objection, both leaving us room for the one remark more—that Ben Jonson and John Milton, the most scholastic of our poets, brought out of their scholarship different gifts to our language that Jonson brought more Greek, and Milton more Latin, while the influences of the latter and greater poet were at once more slowly and more extensively effectual.

Butler was the contemporary of Milton: we confess a sort of continuous "innocent surprise" in the thought of it, however the craziness of our imagination may be in fault. We have stood by as witnesses while the great poet sanctified the visible earth with the oracle of his blindness, and are startled that a profane voice should be hardy enough to break the echo, and jest in the new consecrated temple. But this is rather a Roundheaded than a longheaded way of adverting to poor Butler, who, for all his gross injustice to the purer religionists, in the course of "flattering the vices and daubing the iniquities" of King Charles's court, does scarcely deserve at our hands either to be treated as a poet or punished for being a contemporary of the poet Milton. Butler's business was the business of desecration, the exact reverse of a poet's, and by the admission of all the world his business is well done. His learning is various and extensive, and his fancy communicates to it its mobility. His wit has a gesture of authority, as if it might, if it pleased, be wisdom. His power over language, "tattered and ragged" like Skelton's, is as wonderful as his power over images. And if nobody can commend the design of his "Hudibras," which is the English counterpart of "Don Quixote,"—a more objectionable servility than an adaptation from a serious composition, in which case that humorous effect would have been increased by the travesty, which

is actually injured and precisely in an inverse ratio, by the burlesque copy of the burlesque,—everybody must admit the force of the execution. When Prior attempted afterwards the same line of composition with his peculiar grace and airiness of diction,—when Swift ground society into jests with a rougher turning of the wheel,—still, then and since, has this Butler stood alone. He is the genius of his class, a natural enemy to poetry under the form of a poet, not a great man, but a powerful man.

We return to the generation of Dryden and to Pope his inheritor—Pope, the perfecter, as we have already taken occasion to call him—who stood in the presence of his father Dryden, before that energetic soul, weary with its long literary work which was not always clean and noble, had uttered its last wisdom or foolishness through the organs of the body. Unfortunately, Pope had his advisers apart from his muses, and their counsel was "be correct." To be correct, therefore, to be great through correctness, was the end of his ambition, an aspiration scarcely more calculated for the production of noble poems than the philosophy of utilitarianism is for that of lofty virtues. Yet correctness seemed a virtue rare in the land, Dr Johnson having crowned Lord Roscommon over Shakespeare's head, "the only correct writer before Addison." The same critic predicated of Milton, that he could not cut figures upon cherry-stones. Pope glorified correctness, and dedicated himself to cherry-stones from first to last. A cherry-stone was the apple of his eye.

Now we are not about to take up any popular cry against Pope, he has been overpraised and is underpraised, and, in the silence of our poetical experience, ourselves may confess personally to the guiltiness of either extremity. He was not a great poet, he meant to be a correct poet, and he was what he meant to be, according to his construction of the

thing meant there are few amongst us who fulfil so literally their ambitions. Moreover we will admit to our reader in the confessional, that, however convinced in our innermost opinion of the superiority of Dryden's genius, we have more pleasure in reading Pope than we ever could enjoy or imagine under Pope's master. We incline to believe that Dryden being the greatest poet-power, Pope is the best poet-manual, and that whatever Dryden has done—we do not say conceived, we do not say suggested, but *done*—Pope has done that thing better. For translations, we hold up Pope's Homer against Dryden's Virgil and the world. Both translations are utterly and equally contrary to the antique, both bad with the same sort of excellence, but Pope's faults are Dryden's faults, while Dryden's are not Pope's. We say the like of the poems from Chaucer, we say the like of the philosophic and satirical poems, the art of reasoning in verse is admirably attained by either poet, but practised with more grace and point by the later one. To be sure, there is the "Alexander's Feast" ode, called, until people half believed what they said, the greatest ode in the language! But here is, to make the scales even again, the "Eloisa" with tears on it—faulty but tender—of a sensibility which glorious John was not born with a heart for. To be sure, it was not necessary that John Dryden should keep a Bolingbroke to think for him, but to be sure again, it is something to be born with a heart, particularly for a poet. We recognise besides, in Pope, a delicate fineness of tact, of which the precise contrary is unpleasantly obvious in his great master, Horace Walpole's description of Selwyn, *une bête inspirée*, with a restriction of *bête* to the animal sense, fitting glorious John like his crown. Now there is nothing of this coarseness of the senses about Pope, the little pale Queen Anne's valetudinarian had a nature fine enough to stand erect upon the point

of a needle like a Schoolman's angel, and whatever he wrote coarsely, he did not write from inward impulse, but from external conventionality, from a bad social Swift-sympathy. For the rest, he carries out his master's principles into most excellent and delicate perfection: he is rich in his degree. And there is, indeed, something charming even to an enemy's ear in this exquisite balancing of sounds and phrases, these "shining rows" of oppositions and appositions, this glorifying of commonplaces by antithetic processes, this catching, in the rebound, of emphasis upon rhyme and rhyme, all, in short, of this Indian jugglery and Indian carving upon—cherry-stones! "and she herself" (that is, poetry)—

And she herself one fair Antithesis

When Voltaire threw his "Henriade" into the fire and Henault rescued it, "Souvenez-vous," said the president to the poet, "that I burnt my lace ruffles for the sake of your epic." It was about as much as the epic was worth. For our own part, we would sacrifice not only our point, but the prosperity of our very fingers to save from a similar catastrophe these works of Pope, and this, although the most perfect and original of all of them, "The Rape of the Lock," had its fortune in a fire-safe. They are the works of a master. A great poet? Oh no! A true poet?—perhaps not. Yet a man, be it remembered, of such mixed gracefulness and power, that Lady Mary Wortley [Montagu] deigned to coquet with him and Dennis shook before him in his shoes.

Nature, as we have observed, had been expelled by a fork, under the hand of Pope's progenitors, and if in him and around him we see no sign of her return, we do not blame Pope for what is, both in spirit and in form, the sin of his school. Still less would we "play at bowles" with Byron, and praise his right use of the right poetry of Art. Our views of Nature and of Art have been suffi-

ciently explained to leave our opinion obvious of the controversy in question, in which, as in a domestic broil, "there were faults on both sides" Let a poet never write the words "tree," "hill," "river," and he may till be true to nature Most untrue, on the other hand, most narrow, is the poetical sectarianism, and essentially most unpoetical, which stands among the woods and fields announcing with didactic phlegm, "Here only is nature" Nature is where God is Poetry is where God is Can you go up or down or around, and not find Him? In the loudest hum of your machinery, in the dunnest volume of your steam, in the foulest street of your city,—there, as surely as in the Brocken pinewoods, and the watery thunders of Niagara,—there, assuredly as He is above all, lie Nature and Poetry in full life Speak, and they will answer! Nature is a large meaning let us make room for it in the comprehension of our love!—for the coral rock built up by the insect and the marble column erected by the man

In this age of England, however, pet-named the Augustan, there was no room either for Nature or Art Art and Nature (for we will not separate their names) were at least maimed and dejected and sickening day by day—

Quoth she, I grieve to see your leg  
Stuck in a hole here, like a peg,

and even so, or like the peg of a top humming drowsily, our poetry stood still There was an abundance of "correct writers," yes, and of "elegant writers" there was Parnell, for instance, who would be called besides, a pleasing writer by any pleasing critic, and Addison, a proverb for the "virtuousest, discreetest, best" with all the world Or if, after the Scotch mode of Monkbarns, we call our poets by their possessions, not so wronging their characteristics, there was "The Dispensary" the "Art of Preserving Health" the "Art of Cookery,"—and "Trivia," or the "Fan,"—take

Gay by either of those names! and "Cider," or the "Splendid Shilling"—take Phillips, Milton's imitator, by either of these! and there was Pomfret, not our "choice," the concentrate essence of namby-pambyism, and Prior, a brother spirit of the French Gresset,—a half-brother, of an inferior race, yet to be praised by us for one instinct obvious in him, a blind stretching of the hand to a sweeter order of versification than was current Of Young we could write much he was the very genius of antithesis, a genius breaking from "the system," with its broken chain upon his limbs, and frowning darkly through the grey monotony, a grander writer by spasms than by volitions Blair was of his class, but rougher, a brawny contemplative Orson And how many of our readers may be unaware of the underground existence of another "Excursion," than the deathless one of our days, and in blank verse, too, and in several cantos, and how nobody will thank us for digging at these fossil remains! It is better to remember Mallet by his touching ballad of "William and Margaret" a word taken from diviner lips to becoming purpose, only we must not be thrown back upon the "Ballads," lest we wish to live with them for ever Our literature is rich in ballads, a form epitomical of the epic and dramatic, and often vocal when no other music is astir, and to give a particular account of which would take us far across our borders

As it is, we are across them, we are benighted in our wandering and straitened for room We glance back vainly to the lights of the later drama, and see Dryden, who had the heart to write rhymed plays after Shakespeare, and but little heart for anything else,—and Congreve, and Lillo, and Southerne, and Rowe, all gifted writers, and Otway, master of tears, who starved in our streets for his last tragedy—a poet most effective in broad touches, rather moving, as it appears to us by scenes than by words

Returning to the general poets, we meet, with bent faces toward hill-side Nature, Thomson and Dyer, in writing which names together, we do not depreciate Thomson's, however we may a little exalt Dyer's. We praise neither of these writers for being descriptive poets, but for that faithful transcript of their own impressions, which is a common subject of praise in both. Dyer being more distinct, perhaps, in his images, and Thomson more impressive in his general effect. Both are faulty in their blank verse diction, the latter too florid and verbose the former (although "Grongar Hill" is simple almost to baldness) too pedantic and *constructive*—far too "saponaceous" and "pomaceous." We offer pastoral salutation also to Shenstone and Hammond, pairing them like Polyphemus's sheep, fain to be courteous if we could, and we could if we were "Philida." Surely it is an accomplishment to utter a pretty thought so simply that the world is forced to remember it, and that gift was Shenstone's, and he the most poetical of country gentlemen. May every shrub on the lawn of Leasowes be ever green to his brow! And next, oh most patient reader,—pressed to a conclusion and in a pairing humour, we come to Gray and Akenside together, yes together! because if Gray had written a philosophic poem he would have written it like the "Pleasures of Imagination," and because Akenside would have written odes like Gray, if he could have commanded a rapture. Gray, studious and sitting in the cold, learnt the secret of a simulated and innocent fire (the Greek fire he might have called it), which burns beautifully to the eye, but never would have harmed M. Henault's ruffles. Collins had twenty times the lyric genius of Gray, we feel his fire in our cheeks. But Gray, but Akenside—both with a volition towards enthusiasm—have an under-constitution of most scholastic coldness. "Si vis me flere," you must weep, but they only take out their pocket-handkerchiefs. We

confess humbly, before gods and men, that we never read to the end of Akenside's "Pleasures," albeit we have read Plato some pleasures, say the moralists, are more trying than pains. Let us turn for refreshment to Goldsmith—that amiable genius, upon whose diadem we feel our hands laid ever and anon in familiar love,—to Goldsmith, half emerged from "the system," his forehead touched with the red ray of the morning, a cordial singer. Even Johnson, the ponderous critic of the system, who would hang a dog if he read "Lycidas" twice, who wrote the lives of the poets and left out the poets, even he loved Goldsmith! and Johnson was Dryden's critical bear, a rough bear, and with points of noble beardom. But while he growled the leaves of the greenwood fell, and oh, how sick to faintness grew the poetry of England! Anna Seward, "by'r Lady," was the "muse" of those days and Mr Hayley "the bard," and Hannah More wrote our dramas, and Helen Williams our odes and Rosa Matilda our elegiacs—and Blacklock blind from his birth, our descriptive poems, and Mr Whalley our "domestic epics," and Darwin our poetical philosophy, and Lady Millar encouraged literature at Bath, with red taffeta and "the vase." But the immortal are threatened vainly. It was the sickness of renewal rather than of death, St Leon had his fainting hand on the elixir the new era was alive in Cowper. We do not speak of him as the master of a transition only as a hinge on which it slowly turned, only as an earnest, tender writer, and true poet enough to be true to himself. Cowper sang in England and Thomas Warton also,—of a weaker voice but in tune and Beattie, for whom we have too much love to analyse it, seeing that we drew our childhood's first poetic pleasure from his "Minstrel." And Burns walked in glory on the Scottish mountain's side and everywhere Dr Percy's collected ballads were sowing the great hearts of some still living for praise, with



impulses of greatness It was the revival of poetry, the opening of the fifth era the putting down of the Dryden dynasty, the breaking of the serf bondage the wrenching of the iron from the soul And Nature and Poetry did embrace one another and all men who were lovers of either and of our beloved England, were enabled to resume the pride of their consciousness and looking round the world say gently, yet gladly, "Our Poets"

When Mr Wordsworth gave his first poems to the public, it was not well with poetry in England The "system" riveted upon the motions of poetry by Dryden and his dynasty had gradually added to the restraint of slavery, its weakness and emasculation The change from poetry to rhetoric had issued in another change, to the commonplaces of rhetoric We had no longer to complain of Pope's antithetic glories there was "a vile antithesis" for those also The followers were not as the master, and the very facility with which the trick of acoustical mechanics was caught up by the former—admitting of "singing for the million," with ten fingers each for natural endowment, and the ability to count them for requirement,—made wider and more apparent the difference of dignity between the Popes and the Pope Joans Little by little, by slow and desolate degrees, Thought had perished out of the way of the appointed and most beaten rhythm, and we had the beaten rhythm, without the living footstep—we had the monotony of the military movement, without the heroic impulse—the cross of the Legion of Honour, hung, as it once was, in a paroxysm of converted Bourbonism, at a horse's tail, and the "fork," which expelled Nature, dropped feebly downward, blunted of its point And oh! to see who sat then in England in the seats of the elders! The Elizabethan men would have gnashed their teeth at such a sight, the Queen Anne's men would have multiplied Dunciads Of the third George's men

(*'Αχαιίδες οὐκ ἔρ' Ἀχαιοί*), Hayley, too good a scholar to bear to be so bad a poet, was a chief hope, and Darwin, mistaker of the optic nerve for the poetical sense, an inventive genius

But Cowper had a great name, and Burns a greater, and the *réveillé* of Dr Percy's "Reliques of English Poetry" was echoed presently by the "Scottish Minstrelsy" There was a change, a revival, an awakening, a turning at least upon the pillow, of some who slept on in mediocrity, as if they felt the daylight on their shut eyelids there was even a group of noble hearts (Coleridge, the idealist poet among poets, in their midst), foreseeing the sun Nature, the long banished, re-dawned, like the morning Nature, the true mother, cried afar off to her children, "Children, I am here! come to me" It was a hard act to come, and involved the learning and the leaving of much Conventionalities of phrase and rhythm, conventional dialects set apart for poets, conventional words, attitudes, and manners, consecrated by "wits,"—all such Nesian trappings were to be wrenched off, even to the cuticle into which they had urged their poison But it was an act not too hard for the doing There was a visible movement towards Nature, the majority moving of course with reservation, but individuals with decision, some rending downward their garments of pestilent embroidery, and casting themselves at her feet As the chief of the movement, the Xenophon of the return, we are bound to acknowledge this great Wordsworth, and to admire how, in a bravery bravest of all because born of love, in a passionate unreservedness sprung of genius, and to the actual scandal of the world which stared at the filial familiarity, he threw himself not at the feet of Nature, but straightway and right tenderly upon her bosom And so, trustfully as child before mother, self-renouncingly as child after sin, absorbed away from the consideration of publics and critics as child at

playhours, with a simplicity startling to the *blasé* critical ear as inventiveness with an innocent utterance felt by the competent thinker to be wisdom, and with a faithfulness to natural impressions acknowledged since by all to be the highest art,—this William Wordsworth did sing his “Lyrical Ballads” where the “Art of criticism” had been sung before, and “the world would not let them die”

The voice of nature has a sweetness which few of us, when sufficiently tried, can gainsay, it penetrates our artificial “tastes,” and overcomes us, and our ignorance seldom proves strong, in proportion to our instincts. We recognise, like Ulysses’ dog, with feeble joyous gesture the master’s voice and the sound is nearly always pleasant to us, however we may want strength to follow after it. But while at the period we refer to, the recognition and gratulation were true and deep, the old conventionalities and prejudices hung heavily in bondage and repression. The great body of readers would recoil to the Drydenic rhythm, to the Queen Anne’s poetical cant, to anti-Saxonisms whether in Latin or French, or exacted, as a condition of a poet’s faithfulness to nature, such an effervescence of his emotions as had rendered Pope natural in the “Eloisa” “Let us all forsooth be Eloisa and so natural,”—the want was an excuse for loving nature, and the opinion went that the daily heartbeat was more obnoxious in poetry than the incidental palpitation. Poor Byron (true miserable genius, soul-blind great poet!) ministered to this singular need, identifying poetry and passion. Poetry ought to be the revelation of the complete man—and Byron’s manhood having no completion nor entirety, consisting on the contrary of a one-sided passionateness, his poems discovered not a heart, but the wound of a heart, not humanity, but disease, not life, but a crisis. It was not so, it was not in the projection of a passionate emotion,

that William Wordsworth committed himself to nature, but in full resolution and determinate purpose. He is scarcely, perhaps, of a passionate temperament, although still less is he cold, rather quiet in his love, as the stockdove, and brooding over it as constantly, and with as soft an inward song lapsing outwardly—serene through deepness—saying himself of his thoughts, that they “do often lie too deep for tears,” which does not mean that their painfulness will not suffer them to be wept for, but that their closeness to the supreme Truth hallows them, like the cheek of an archangel, from tears. Call him the very opposite of Byron, who, with narrower sympathies for the crowd, yet stood nearer to the crowd, because everybody understands passion. Byron was a poet through pain. Wordsworth is a feeling man because he is a thoughtful man, he knows grief itself by a reflex emotion, by sympathy, rather than by suffering. He is eminently and humanly expansive, and, spreading his infinite egotism over all the objects of his contemplation, reiterates the love, life, and poetry of his peculiar being in transcribing and chanting the material universe, and so sinks a broad gulf between his descriptive poetry and that of the Darwinian painter-poet school. Darwin was, as we have intimated, all optic nerve. Wordsworth’s eye is his soul. He does not see that which he does not intellectually discern, and he beholds his own cloud-capped Helvellyn under the same conditions with which he would contemplate a grand spiritual abstraction. In his view of the exterior world—as in a human Spinozism,—mountains and men’s hearts share in a sublime unity of humanity, yet his Spinozism does in nowise affront God, for he is eminently a religious poet, if not, indeed, altogether as generous and capacious in his Christianity as in his poetry, and, being a true Christian poet, he is scarcely least so when he is not writing directly upon the subject of religion, just as we learn

sometimes without looking up, and by the mere colour of the grass, that the sky is cloudless. But what is most remarkable in this great writer is his poetical consistency. There is a wonderful unity in these multi-form poems of one man: they are "bound each to each in natural piety" even as his days are, and why? because they *are* his days—all his days, work days and Sabbath days—his life, in fact, and not the unconnected works of his life as vulgar men do opine of poetry and do rightly opine of vulgar poems, but the sign, seal, and representation of his life—nay, the actual audible breathing of his inward spirit's life. When Milton said that a poet's life should be a poem, he spoke a high moral truth, if he had added a reversion of the saying, that a poet's poetry should be his life,—he would have spoken a critical truth, not low

"Foole, saide my Muse to mee, looke in thine heart, and write,"—and not only we must repeat, at least times, fast times, or curfew times—not only at times of crisis and emotion, but at all hours of the clock, for that which God thought good enough to write, or permit the writing of, on His book, the heart, is not too common, let us be sure, to write again in the best of our poems. William Wordsworth wrote these common things of nature, and by no means in a phraseology or in a style. He was daring in his commonness as any of your Tamerlanes may be daring when far fetching an alien image from an outermost world, and, notwithstanding the ribald cry of that "vox populi" which has, in the criticism of poems, so little the character of divinity, and which loudly and mockingly, at his first utterance, denied the sanctity of his simplicities,—the Nature he was faithful to "betrayed not the heart which loved her," but, finally, justifying herself and him, "DID"—without the "Edinburgh Review"

"Hero-worshippers," as we are, and sitting for all the critical pretence—in right or wrong of which we

speak at all—at the feet of Mr Wordsworth,—recognising him, as we do, as poet-hero of a movement essential to the better being of poetry, as poet-prophet of utterances greater than those who first listened could comprehend, and of influences most vital and expansive—we are yet honest to confess that certain things in the "Lyrical Ballads" which most provoked the ignorant innocent hootings of the mob, do not seem to us all heroic. Love, like ambition, may overvault itself, and Betty Foys of the Lake school (so called) may be as subject to conventionalities as Pope's Lady Bettys. And, perhaps, our great poet might, through the very vehemence and nobleness of his hero and prophet-work for nature, confound, for some blind moment, and by an association easily traced and excused, nature with rusticity, the simple with the bald, and even fall into a vulgar conventionality in the act of spurning a graceful one. If a trace of such confounding may occasionally be perceived in Mr Wordsworth's earlier poetry, few critics are mad enough to-day to catch at the loose straws of the full golden sheaf and deck out withal their own arrogant fictions, in the course of mouthing mocks at the poet. The veriest critic of straw knoweth well, at this hour of the day, that if Mr Wordsworth was ever over-rustic, it was not through incapacity to be right royal, that of all poets, indeed, who have been kings in England, not one has swept the purple with more majesty than this poet, when it hath pleased him to be majestic. *Vivat rex*,—and here is a new volume of his reign. Let us rejoice, for the sake of literature and the age, in the popularity which is ready for it, and in the singular happiness of a great poet living long enough to rebound from the "fell swoop" of his poetical destiny, survive the ignorance of his public, and convict the prejudices of his reviewers. It is a literal "poetical justice," and one rarest of all, that a great poet

should stand in a permitted sovereignty, without doing so, like poor Inez de Castro, by right of death. It is almost wonderful that his country should clap her hands in praise of him before he has ceased to hear the applause resembles an anachronism. Is Mr Wordsworth startled at receiving from his contemporaries what he expected only from posterity?—is he asking himself "Have I done anything wrong?" Probably not—it is at least with his usual air of calm and advised dignity that he addresses his new volume in its "Envoy"

Go single,—yet aspiring to be joined  
With thy forerunners, that through many  
a year  
Have faithfully prepared each other's  
way—  
Go forth upon a mission best fulfilled  
When and wherever, in this changeful  
world,  
*Power hath been given to please for higher  
ends*  
Than pleasure only, gladdening to pre-  
pare  
For wholesome sadness, troubling to  
refine,  
Calming to raise,

—words of the poet which form a nobler description of the character and uses of his poetry than could be given in any words of a critic

We do not say that the finest of Mr Wordsworth's productions are to be found or should be looked for in the present volume, but the volume is worthy of its forerunners, consistent in noble earnestness and serene philosophy true poet's work,—the hand trembling not a jot for years or yeariness,—the full face of the soul turned hopefully and stilly as ever towards the True, and catching across its ridge the idealised sunlight, the Beautiful. And yet if we were recording angel, instead of only recording reviewer we should drop a tear—another—and end by weeping out that series of sonnets in favour of capital punishments—moved that a hand which has traced life-warrants so long for the literature of England, should thus sign a mis-

placed "Benedicite" over the hangman and his victim. We turn away from them to other sonnets—to forget aught in Mr Wordsworth's poetry we must turn to his poetry—and however the greatest poets of our country—the Shakespeares, Spensers, Miltons—worked upon high sonnet-ground, not one opened over it such broad and pouring sluices of various thought, imagery, and emphatic eloquence as he has done.

The tender Palnodia is beyond Petrarch —

Though I beheld at first with blank surprise

This work, I now have gazed on it so long,

I see its truth with unreluctant eyes,  
O, my beloved! I have done thee wrong,  
Conscious of blessedness, but, whence it springs

Ever too heedless, as I now perceive  
Morn into noon did pass, noon into eve,  
And the old day was welcome as the young,

As welcome and as beautiful—in sooth  
More beautiful, as being a thing more holy,

Thanks to thy virtues, to the eternal youth

Of all thy goodness, never melancholy,  
To thy large heart and humble mind, that cast

Into one vision, future, present, past!

That "*more beautiful*" is most beautiful all human love's cunning is in it, besides the full glorifying smile of Christian love

Last in the volume is the tragedy of "The Borderers," which, having lain for some fifty years "unregarded" among its author's papers,—a singular destiny for these printing days when our very morning-talk seems to fall naturally into pica type,—caused, in its announcement from afar, the most faithful disciples to tremble for the possible failure of their master. Perhaps they trembled with cause. The master, indeed, was a prophet of humanity, but he was wiser in love than terror, in admiration than pity, and rather intensely than actively human, capacious to embrace within himself the whole nature of things and beings, but not going out of himself to embrace anything, a

poet of one large sufficient soul, but not polypsychical like a dramatist. Therefore his disciples trembled and we will not say that the tragedy, taken as a whole, does not justify the fear. There is something grand and Greek in the intention which hinges it, showing how crime makes crime in cursed generation, and how black hearts, like whiter ones (Iopaze or Ebène), do cry out and struggle for sympathy and brotherhood, granting that black heart (Oswald) may stand something too much on the extreme of evil to represent humanity broadly enough for a drama to turn upon. The action, too, although it does not, as might have been apprehended, lose itself in contemplation, has no unhesitating firm dramatic march—perhaps it “potters” a little, to take a word from Mrs Butler,—and when all is done we look vainly within us for an impression, the response to the unity of the whole. But, again, when all is done, the work is Mr Wordsworth’s, and the conceptions and utterances living and voiceful in it, bear no rare witness to the master. The old blind man, left to the ordeal of the desert—the daughter in agony hanging upon the murderer for consolation—knock against the heart, and take back answers, and ever and anon there are sweet gushings of such words as this poet only knows, showing how, in a “late remorse of love,” he relapses into pastoral dreams, notwithstanding his new vocation, and within the very sight of the theatric *thymele* —

of our story,—seeing that Mr Wordsworth’s life does present a high moral to his generation, to forget which in his poetry would be an unworthy compliment to the latter. It is advantageous for us all, whether poets or poetasters, or talkers about either, to know what a true poet is, what his work is, and what his patience and successes must be, so as to raise the popular idea of these things, and either strengthen or put down the individual aspiration. “Art,” it was said long ago, “requires the whole man,” and “Nobody,” it was said later, “can be a poet who is anything else,” but the present idea of Art requires the segment of a man, and everybody who is anything at all is a poet in a parenthesis. And our shelves groan with little books over which their readers groan less metaphorically, there is a plague of poems in the land apart from poetry, and many poets who live and are true do not live by their truth, but hold back their full strength from Art because they do not *reverence* it fully, and all booksellers cry aloud and do not spare, that poetry will not sell, and certain critics utter melancholy frenzies, that poetry is worn out for ever—as if the morning-star was worn out from heaven, or “the yellow primrose” from the grass, and Mr Disraeli the younger, like Bildad comforting Job, suggests that we may content ourselves for the future with a rhythmic prose, printed like prose for decency, and supplied, for comfort, with a parish allowance of two or three rhymes to a paragraph.

Strong deeds awake  
And, clamouring, throng the portals of  
the hour

It is well for them and all to count the  
cost of this life of a master in poetry,  
and learn from it what a true poet's  
crown is worth, to recall both the  
long life's work for its sake—the  
work of observation, of meditation, of  
reaching past models into nature, of  
reaching past nature unto God,  
and the early life's loss for its sake—  
the loss of the popular cheer, of the  
critical assent, and of the "money  
in the purse" It is well and full  
of exultation to remember *now* what  
a silent, blameless, heroic life of  
poetic duty this man has lived,—  
how he never cried rudely against  
the world because he was excluded  
for a time from the parsley garlands  
of its popularity, nor sinned morally  
because he was sinned against intel-  
lectually, nor, being tempted and  
threatened by paymaster and re-  
viewer, swerved from the righteous-

ness and high aims of his inexorable  
genius And it cannot be ill to con-  
clude by enforcing a high example  
by some noble precepts which taken  
from the "Musophilus" of old  
Daniel do contain, to our mind, the  
very code of chivalry for poets —  
Be it that my unseasonable song  
Come out of Time, that fault is in the  
Time,  
And I must not do virtue so much wrong  
As love her aught the worse for others'  
crime

And for my part, if only one allow  
The care my labouring spirits take in  
this,  
He is to me a theatre large enow,  
And his applause only sufficient is—  
All my respect is bent but to his brow,  
That is my all, and all I am is his  
And if some worthy spirits be pleased  
too,  
It shall more comfort breed, but not  
more will,  
BUT WHAT IF NONE? *It cannot yet undo*  
*The love I bear unto this holy skill*  
*This is the thing that I was born to do,*  
*This is my scene, this part must I fulfil*



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